

“God is FOR Us”

Romans 8:31-39

May 7, 2006

Christians are taught to be people, who live expectantly, who rise above their present circumstances and see a better future, who trust God even in the darkest experiences of life and who have a faith in God even when the evidence seems to contradict it.

But some experiences get in the way of that confidence.

Christians are taught that by God’s grace all is well between them and God, that their lives are under his control and that their futures are secure. But we are sometimes tempted to think otherwise.

Is God truly in control of my present circumstances and my future?

Is it really well with my soul?

And will I always remain faithful to God and belong to Him?

Several years ago TIME magazine reported a poll, which stated that 81% of Americans believe in heaven as a place where people live forever when they die.

And most of those people believe they will go to that heaven when they die.

But I wonder how certain of that they are.

How certain are **YOU** that when you die you will go to heaven?

But the future is not the only issue.

What about right now?

How certain are you that your life is actually under control?

When life is going along “swimmingly” we don’t wonder.

But when plans begin to fall apart, when all our efforts and expertise can’t get life back on track,

when it finally become too obvious to miss that life isn’t going to get back on track,

there is a growing suspicion that maybe no one is in control.

Maybe life is simply a series of random circumstances with no purpose and no end but death.

Have you ever thought those thoughts?

Though you may not admit it to another living soul, do you ever have serious doubts about life, about God?

I said earlier that a lot of things conspire against our sense of confidence in our relationship with God.

Not only thoughts of death, and not only the circumstances of life over which we have no control BUT EVEN our own conduct conspires against a firm confidence in our relationship to God.

We know our own failings so well we sometimes wonder if we know God at all.

Given the way we act, we wonder if we have any relationship with God except just being under his condemnation.

Altogether it is rather easy to fall into some frightening doubts about our relationship with God.

A lot of people will say "God is love" but they aren't so certain He loves them particularly and unfailingly.

In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul was writing to people who lived, as we do, in a "real" world.

They lived in a culture that feared death and had all sorts of uninformed ideas about it.

They lived in a world where financial and physical security were fleeting at best.

And since they had become Christians they had the added pressure of being social outcasts and worse yet being perceived as threats to society.

Becoming Christians, they had put everything on the line.

All their doubts inspired by death and thoughts of life after death,
all their doubts inspired by the darkest circumstances of life,

all their doubts inspired by their own continuing sinfulness
could be expressed in one central question:

Could and would God pull off what he had promised?

If you have become a Christ-follower, you too have put everything on the line.

You have committed your eternal future to him.

You have committed your present, sometimes seemingly out of control, circumstances to him.

You have even committed your inadequacies, your sinfulness, and your faithlessness to him.

You have placed your life, now and forever, in the hands of God - the question is:

Will God come through?

We are about to look at one of the most positive and affirming passage in the entire Bible.

Christian, if ever again you doubt your relationship to God, this text is medicine for the mind, salve for the soul, it is healing for the heart.

Look with me please at Romans 8:28-39

These are familiar words, but I want you to hear them again.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? 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, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I were to place a caption over these words or if I were to hang a banner capturing the idea of these words I would write:

"God's Unfailing Love"

IF God by His grace has called you to himself and you have by faith received Christ's righteousness as your own, then you belong to God, and nothing, I repeat nothing; can separate you from His love.

You can depend on it; you can trust God.

Is God stronger than your death?

Is God greater than your circumstances?

Is God's grace larger than your sin? YES!

PRAY: Ephesians 1:18-19:

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may **know** the hope to which he has called you, the **riches** of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great **power** for us who believe."

READ 8:31a "What then shall we say in response to this?"

Paul said he's going to give a response - but a response to what?

A response probably to all he's written thus far, but at least to what he's just written:

8:1-4 God has declared you not guilty

8:9-11 God's Spirit dwells in you.

8:16 God has adopted you into his family

8:18 Your future makes the present worth it.

8:26 The Spirit of God prays for you.

8:28 God takes even the hardest things of life and uses them for our good

8:29-30 What God starts, he finishes.

“Now”, Paul says, “what can we conclude from these things:
Romans 8:31 “What then shall we say in response to this?”

Paul says you can count on God for these reasons:

First of all, you can count on him because in verse 31 we read, "If God is for us who can be against us?"

That rhetorical question has an obvious answer - "Nobody"
"If God is for us (nobody) can be against us?"

Now it doesn't mean we have no adversaries or difficulties.
But it means that if God is for us, by comparison, the adversaries don't count.

I know I've told the story too often, but the schoolhouse to which my brother and sisters and I walked, when I was a child, was about a mile from our farm home.

There was one boy in particular, with whom I had trouble for a few weeks.

He was stronger and faster than me.

And when school was out in the afternoon he would hide in the bushes by the road to my home and literally attack me.

After a couple of such attacks, I remember asking my older and much larger and stronger brother to walk with me to our home.

When my brother was with me I would whistle and laugh as I walked past the place where I knew that boy was lying in wait.

If my brother was for me, nobody could be against me!

The supreme, eternal, sovereign, creator, Lord of all is on your side.
If God is for you who can be against you?

There are four words in that verse that are a summary and affirmation of the Gospel: **God is for us.**

We who deserve God's wrath because of our sin have been granted his grace.

Now it is true: He is no longer against us, He is **for** us.

And if GOD is for me, life's difficulties and even death itself cannot defeat me.

The second reason Paul gives why you can count on God is in verse 32

“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”

This is an argument from the greater to the lesser.

Meaning, certainly if God did the greater thing, that is, gave his own Son, He will do the lesser thing - give us whatever we need.

Several years ago a friend of ours volunteered for surgery to have one of his kidneys removed to give to his daughter.

The man was old enough and knew enough about the risks to his own health that he had some fear about his own future.

But his love for his daughter was so great that he risked his own life.

Now can you imagine months later that father refusing to drive his daughter to the doctor's office for a check up.

If he would do the greater, risk his life, then surely he would do the lesser.

Rom 5:10 says it this way, “For if, when we were God’s **enemies**, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through **his life**.”

God loves you so much that the curse of God against your sin fell on Jesus - nothing was held back.

The severity of the sentence against sin was not mitigated.

Jesus bore all our punishment.

If God would, **for your sake**, pour out his wrath on his **own son** - if God in Christ would suffer damnation in your place -

Then no longer wonder if he will continue to love you, keep you, sustain you, and finally take you to be with himself.

Linda Anderson of Georgia has a 19-year-old daughter named B.J.

For 17 years B.J. has been mentally impaired.

So severe is her disability that she has constant headaches, convulsions and strokes.

She has never walked or talked and since the strokes, she never will.

Linda has been with her daughter B.J. every minute - changing her, bathing her and taking hours to feed her liquid with a spoon so she won't choke.

The daughter, B.J.'s, many convulsions each day end with her body as limp as if she were dead.

The mother, Linda, writes of her fear, of her frustrations and of her tiredness.

What motivates her to go on?

There is no pay-off visible here - Linda gets nothing - only more tired and older.

What motivates her? Love!

You can't test it, measure it, or even analyze it - it just is.

It baffles scientists and psychologists.

It is love.

And greater than that is how God loves you.

The third reason why we can count on God is given in verse 33

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.”

The words "Charge" and "justifies" are legal terms.

In order to understand what is being said here, imagine the following scene:

God is in his courtroom. He is judge, jury and executioner.

As in the book of Job, Satan approaches the judge and says,
"See your so-called servant there? "Yes, that one, Jerry.

Satan continues: "God, I know you are holy, and that sin is a violation of your holiness, a rebellion against your sovereignty and I know you are just and so sin must be punished.

"Certainly, God, it has not escaped your notice that Jerry sinned today.

He knows how you feel about those things and yet he rebelliously went ahead.

What about it God, aren't you going to punish him? He deserves hell.

In the Old Testament book of Zechariah there is a scene similar to what I'm describing here:

A man named Joshua was standing before the Lord.

He was standing there in filthy clothes symbolic of his sinfulness.

Standing at his side, to accuse him before God, was Satan.

The Lord turns to Satan and rebukes him and dismisses him and his accusations.

The Lord goes on to say that Joshua is a man that the Lord has chosen.

And then the Lord directs that his filthy clothes be removed and that clean, rich garments be placed on him.

The symbolism is apparent - Satan's accusations are dismissed **because** God has chosen to forgive Joshua's sins and grant him God's own holiness.

If **God** has forgiven him - there is no charge against him.

Since God has forgiven you for all your sin, past, present and future, there is now no case against you and there never will be one against you.

Christ has paid for your sin - God has justified you – in spite of the accusations, there is no valid charge against you.

You can count on God because he has provided for your forgiveness.

**The fourth reason why you can count on God is given in verse 34
 “Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”**

Condemn means to judge as guilty - to pass sentence.

Who is the only one who has the right to judge and pass sentence?
 God.

But rather than sentencing us to death, what has He done?

He has declared us not guilty on the basis of his death for us.

Who can condemn you - only Jesus, and he won't - he died for you.

But more than that is said here:

Not only did he die in our place, he was raised from the dead –
 proving his power over death and sin.

And following his resurrection he ascended to heaven and is in
 the exalted position of supreme authority.

And from that position does he condemn us – no!

He, “intercedes for us”.

Not only does he not condemn us he
 aggressively acts on our behalf.

**The fifth reason we are to believe in God's unfailing love is given in
 verses 35-37**

**“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or
 hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or
 sword? As it is written:**

“For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him
 who loved us.”**

When are we most likely to doubt God's love and keeping power?

It is when we hurt or when we are in trouble.

In II Corinthians 11:26-27 we are told, Paul went through all of the hardships mentioned here in Romans 8.

And in the midst of it, he personally experienced the faithfulness of God - that is, he knew from his own experience that God would not fail him, because God loved him.

There are many of you here who have gone through life's deepest valleys.

We look at what you have experienced and are experiencing and wonder if **we** could make it - we are actually wondering if our God is big enough to see us through.

From first-hand experience you can say, "Yes, he is!"

The Apostle Paul also could speak from experience:

He had known tribulation - physical suffering.

He had known distress- emotional suffering.

He had known persecution - attacks against him because of his relationship to Jesus.

He had known famine - hunger

He had known nakedness - lack of proper clothing and shelter.

He had known peril - being in constant danger.

And he had faced death itself.

IN fact according to Romans 8:36, quoting from the Old Testament, we can **expect** such times of difficulty.

Are these things signs of God's anger at us?

Are these indications God has abandoned us?

No. Verse 37 hearkens back to verse 28.

What the world around us sees and means for our harm,
what Satan would use to bring us down - God uses for our good.

When we are most discouraged, most doubting, and most faithless, - even in the circumstances when we are tempted to forsake God - God is keeping, guarding, loving.

"More than conquerors" means that not only do we cope, but God actually takes what was intended for evil and uses it to make good!

If the very things that we think are most likely to separate us from God -

not only can **not** separate us but actually work together for our good - then surely nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Some Christians live in the fear that even though God has called them to himself and has begun a good work in them - **they might one day choose to leave God** - they might in great temptation choose to abandon God and lose everything.

Fear not! God will not let you go.

Your relationship to God is not built on your love for him but on his love for you.

Years ago John Shairp wrote these words in old English style but they still speak eloquently of this issue:

Twixt gleams of joy and clouds of doubt
 Our feelings come and go;
 Our best estate is tossed about
 In ceaseless ebb and flow.
 No mood of feeling, form of thought,
 Is constant for a day;
 But thou, O Lord, thou changest not:
 The same thou are alway.

I grasp thy strength, make it mine own,
 My heart with peace is blest;
 I lose my hold, and then comes down
 Darkness, and cold unrest.
 Let me no more my comfort draw
 From my frail grasp of thee,
 In this alone rejoice with awe -
 Thy mighty grasp of me.

Thy purpose of eternal good
 Let me but surely know;

On this I'll lean - let changing mood
 And feeling come or go -
 Glad when thy sunshine fills my soul,
 Not lorn when clouds o'er cast
 since thou within thy sure control
 Of love dost hold me fast.

(found p 158 in Ferguson [Know your Christian Life](#))

God has sovereignly fixed his love on you and nothing can break his hold because God is greater than all else.

Paul's grand conclusion of the whole matter is given to us in verses 38-39.

For I am convinced that neither

- death nor life - (no experience be it of death or the hardships of life)
- neither angels nor demons - (no person be it human or supernatural)
- neither the present nor the future - (no time, be it present situations or future ones)
- neither height nor depth - (no place on earth or in heaven)
- nor any other thing in all creation - (nothing that has ever been created)

Absolutely nothing can ever separate us from the Love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I've told the story before but it illustrates for me the conclusion of Romans 8.

I was 9 or 10 years of age and for some reason I was the only one home on the farm as my parents drove into town in the evening to get something.

A fierce storm arose; it shook the house.

I hid under the covers terrified

Out of the din of the storm I heard a voice, "Jerry, Jerry!"

It was my father's voice - I jumped from that bed and ran and threw myself into his arms.

Amazingly the storm had not stopped, the windows still rattled and the wind still howled but I was secure in my father's love and protection.

And so are you!