

ROMANS 8:31-39 "If Christ Is For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?"

Rom 8:30 "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

As we saw last week, from beginning to end God has planned our destiny with Himself for eternity. From all of eternity God predetermined that you and I be a part of His Kingdom. In doing that He called us to Himself.

That call not only involved the external call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but the internal call of the Spirit where we were enabled, or regenerated, to respond to that call as we saw our lost condition due to our sin.

**Titus 3:5-7** <sup>5</sup> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit*, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

Think about it..... To be personally called and awakened by the Spirit of God Himself as He invites us to repent of our sin and embrace Jesus Christ who has fully satisfied our debt to God through His death and resurrection on our behalf.

The God who predestined us for this very thing calls us and, as verse 30 says, justifies us. That call of the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes, is not just a hope that we'll come to God, it's part of God's design to actually bring us to Himself. And so, God doesn't simply make people savable, He actually and effectually saves His people who were chosen before the foundations of the world.

And as we respond in faith we find our justification in the blood of Jesus Christ. And remember that justification is the legal satisfying of God's perfect demand to meet all of His qualifications for entrance into His presence forever more as He declares us, not guilty.

Since we couldn't meet those demands, He sent His Son who would and then take our penalty and pay it in full, thereby meeting our need perfectly.

But what's interesting about verse 30 is that it goes from predestination to God's call, to justification and then to glory. What about sanctification? Why is sanctification, which is the process God uses in our lives to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ on a daily basis, excluded?

Well, first of all it's not teaching us that sanctification is excluded, nor something which is not part of that eternal plan for God's people.

1Th 5:23 "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Why then would Paul go from justification to glorification without mentioning the importance of God's sanctifying process in our lives on this side of heaven?

That's the question F.F. Bruce raises in his commentary on Romans. His answer makes a lot of sense. "Partly, no doubt, because the coming glory has been in the forefront of his mind; but even more because the difference between sanctification and glory is one of degree only, not one of kind.....

....Sanctification is progressive conformity to the mind or image of Christ here and now (2Cor.3:18; Col.3:10); glory is perfect conformity to the image of Christ there and then. Sanctification is glory begun; glory is sanctification consummated. Paul looks forward to the consummation of the work of grace - a consummation guaranteed by its inception: 'He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ' (Phil.1:6)."

I like what Pastor Chuck says of this: "Although my glorification is yet to come, God speaks of it as past history. What glorious assurance is mine in Christ Jesus. God -- who speaks of things before they are as though they were, because He knows all things and knows they shall be, and as far as He is concerned they are already--has spoken of my glorification. It's as certain as His Word."

As Paul was considering these truths and the awesome realization that our Sovereign God has foreordained our eternal relationship with Himself and the truth that what God has ordained will come to pass, he goes on in Rom 8:31 "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Sometimes we have the idea that God saved us and then turned us loose to fend for ourselves, albeit as we have access to His strength. However, God's purpose is not to let us aimlessly wander through this life.

If He has placed His love on us from all of eternity, then He will not treat us as orphans who walk the streets begging for bread. Before Jesus left this world He told His disciples that He would not leave them in an abandoned state.

Joh 14:16 "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--"

That word comforter in the Greek is *parakletos* and it means an intercessor; consoler. Like a concerned parent, God never designed our relationship to Himself to have any separation from His love.

Rom 8:15-16 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. [Or adoption] And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

Paul touches on this again towards the end of chapter eight. But going back to verse 31, you can see why Paul could say with such confidence, "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

And yet it seems we spend much time in this life dwelling on those who are against us..... The world, Satan, his cohorts who may be other fallen angels or other humans deceived by his craftiness.

All of these who are against us seem to form a powerful alliance. And at times those who may be against us or who may make us feel as though we didn't have a friend in the world, can't even compare to the One who comes along side us as our Comforter and reminds us that if He is for us, it makes no difference who may be against us because no one or no thing can ever defeat the One who gained our victory at Calvary and who is ever by our sides.

This is what David understood about his relationship with God.

Psa 118:6-7 "The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? 7 The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies."

Those who may be against us in this life can never compare to the One who say's, 'I am for you and I am with you, and My love for

you will never fail, and if you're tempted to think it will, simply look to Calvary and consider how much I love you.'

And that's exactly where Paul goes with his thought in Rom 8:32 "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?"

God didn't spare His own Son. He gave us the dearest One He loved from all eternity. Instead of seeing us separated from Himself He chose to offer us His Son so that we might have life with Him forever more.

Jesus freely gave Himself so that our gift of life might be free to us just for the asking and believing. But, He not only gives us Himself, He gives us all things at His disposal. And what isn't at His disposal?

He gives us His Spirit, His power, His love, His strength so that we might depend on Him and walk with Him. All the things we need to grow in His grace He gives us, so that our sanctification and ultimate glorification will come to pass to His honor and glory.

And then as if to place us in a courtroom where our accusers would try to condemn us Paul says in Rom 8:33-34 "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 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."

Pastor Chuck Smith asks the question, "Is God charging me with sin? No! "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin." (Psa.32:2). However, Satan accuses me day and night. He charges me with failure, incompetence, and countless horrible offenses. Yet God has justified me, and He cannot accuse and justify me at the same time. So, why should I worry?"

We shouldn't when it comes to thinking that we can be accused by God of not being justified before the Lord. However, that doesn't mean we should take lightly our sinful behavior. God is at work in our lives to sanctify us, not to allow us to use our freedom as an opportunity to sin.

But praise God He has justified us. And like the apostle John says in 1Jo 2:1 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."

William Barclay makes this comment: "It is as if Paul said: 'You think of Jesus as the Judge who is there to condemn; and well He might for He has won the right. But you are wrong; He is not there to be our prosecuting counsel but the Advocate to plead our cause.'"

As Paul says in verse 34.... Christ died for the penalty of our sins, but He rose from the dead and is now seated at the right of God and is this moment making intercession for you and me.

When the accuser of the brethren, Satan, comes before God and blurts out with his venomous hatred towards God and His people how we have shown ourselves to be unworthy, God simply points to His risen Son and says, 'My Son is worthy to take their sin and no accusation from you will change that truth.'

And like the host of heaven we can exclaim with one voice those words which the apostle John records in Rev 5:9-10 "And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Jesus Christ is worthy to receive honor and glory. He is worthy to accomplish our salvation. But in thanks we should show our gratitude with lives seeking after our God.

Eph 4:1-3 "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Well, we've seen that no one can bring a charge against God's elect that will condemn us before the Justice seat of Christ. We are declared, not guilty by God Himself.

But, is it possible for God's love to waver toward us when we do mess up and sin, or when the trials of life come in like a flood? Is there anything which can separate us from His love? Good question. And wouldn't you know that Paul asks that same question.

Rom 8:35-36 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death

all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." [Psalm 44:22]

We may say, 'Lord when life is hard and troubles surround me will you still love me and be with me in the trouble?' His response is, 'troubles will never separate you from my love.'

'But Lord what about hardships which are beyond my control. Is it possible for your love to be insufficient or lacking when I experience hardships which appear to extinguish your love?' 'No, even in hardships My love will not be separated from you.'

'But, Lord what if life became unbearable and even deadly. Could those things which jeopardize my life, like persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or the sword ever separate me from your love, even when those things appear to suggest that your love has been withdrawn?'

'No, My child. Nothing could ever separate you from the everlasting love I have for you and proved, once and for all, when I laid My life down for you and took it up again so that you too may have life in Me. My love for you is inexhaustible, even if you are being put to death all day long and being taken as a sheep to slaughter, I am with you.'

That portion of scripture that Paul quotes in verse 36 is found in Psalm 44, and it's a cry for help to God who is able to deliver.

Psa 44:22-26 "Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. 23 Awake, O Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. 24 Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression? 25 We are brought down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground. 26 Rise up and help us; redeem us because of your unfailing love.

Have you ever felt that maybe God was asleep while you were in the midst of the battle and you wondered what it would take to arouse Him from slumber to come to your aid?

The psalmist expressed those feelings. But you know the psalmist understood the love of God and that God is faithful to His people. When David wrote psalm 40, which is one of my favorite psalms, he wrote of how God is not only willing to deliver, but more than able.

Psa 40:13-17 "Be pleased, O LORD, to save me; O LORD, come quickly to help me. 14 May all who seek to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. 15 May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!" be appalled at their own shame. 16 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "The LORD be exalted!" 17 Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay."

William Barclay say's, "No affliction, no hardship, no peril can separate us. The disasters of the world do not separate a man from Christ; they bring him closer yet."

In fact, we not only continue to have the love of Christ in such circumstances, we are told that we have much more than we could ever imagine.

Rom 8:37 "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Being a conqueror is quite an accomplishment, but being more than a conqueror through Him who loved us is a fact that we shouldn't overlook in this life.

Being a conqueror implies victory. It implies standing when everyone and everything else has been laid waste by the One who is our Victor. We stand by His side and watch as He gains the victory for us.

Paul asks the question in 1Co 15:55-58 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" [Hosea 13:14] 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Sometimes we're tempted to think that what we do counts for nothing especially when the enemy seems to gain the upper hand. But, all is not as it appears to be. The reality is that since Christ is our Conqueror we must stand firm on the Rock of our salvation and never quit the battle, because we know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Paul talks of this battle and how we must approach it. It is not a war we can fight with worldly weapons because the fight is

spiritual and it must be fought on that spiritual ground. But we are not without God's armor and weapons to ensure victory.

Eph 6:13-17 "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

It is the love of God for us in Christ that makes us more than conquerors by faith. It is the word of God and His Spirit which enables us to walk in the victory.

And so Paul concludes his thought in chapter 8 as he takes us back to the One who has made us more than conquerors and encourages us that no matter what is going on in our lives we can count on the faithfulness of God's love.

Rom 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [nor heavenly rulers] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 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."

Death cannot separate us from Christ, nor this life which tries to persuade us that we must be of the world to find fulfillment. This is why Paul could say, "for me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

Neither angels nor demons could ever separate us from the love of God. Angels work for our good. They are sent from God to minister to us. That's exactly what the writer of Hebrews tells us in Heb 1:14 "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

An angel couldn't and wouldn't try to separate you from Christ's love. OOOH, but what about demons or as other translations put it, principalities? Wouldn't they love to separate us from God's love?

Most certainly! But the issue isn't would they love to separate us from God's love, but could they separate us from God's love. No way!

What about things present? You mean things like Paul brings out in verse 35? Things like tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or swords?

Well, yes and no. Some of those things are present. Some of those things may be future. Can any of those things separate us from God's love? No, not even the uncertainty of the future, because our ultimate future is to be with our God for ever.

"Those He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us who is against us?"

Nothing. No powers, no height, or depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God. But the last part of that verse is what makes this truth a reality. "Which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Only because of Christ's love for us on the cross and our faith in Him alone for our salvation, can we know and experience that love and that relationship. Not just for this world, but for all eternity.

If we are called to be a part of His eternity, it would behoove us to get to know Him well today and love Him above all today. He is our Lord and Savior and our Friend who continually pours out His love on us so that we may live for His glory. He reminds us that there are many evils in this world vying for our time and our hearts, but nothing in this world can satisfy like His love for us which will never waver or diminish.

That love is what Paul spoke of in Rom 5:8-10 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 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!"

And then as if to say, 'now that we have this love and life from Christ, how then shall we live?' .....he says in Rom 6:13-14 "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."

The grace of God predestined our relationship with Him, it was the grace of God which called us out and justified us and will ultimately glorify us.

And in the meantime may we seek the grace which God pours out on us daily, to be received and embraced for what it is; undeserved mercy from the God who loves us and seeks for us to love Him above all.

Grace. What an amazing thing. Let me end with an encouragement given to the Roman church of Paul's time and I believe is for us today.

Rom 16:20 "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."