

What Shall Then We Say?

CLOSING OUT ROMANS 8, THERE ARE 4 QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

VERSE 31

WHO COULD BE
AGAINST US?

VERSE 33

WHO COULD LAY
ANYTHING TO
OUR CHARGE?

VERSE 34

WHO COULD
CONDEMN US?

VERSE 35

WHO COULD
SEPARATE US
FROM THE LOVE
OF GOD IN
CHRIST?

The answer in the context to all these questions is NO ONE. Why? Because God is for us! Though there are many enemies we face in a hostile world, ultimately none of them matter, because they cannot compare to or prevail against God. He has shown us that He is for us by working all things for good and turning evil upside down. He foreknew us, predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, called us, justified us, and glorified us. He has given us eternal victory in Christ, despite the unworthiness of humanity thoroughly displayed in the opening of Romans. The book so far could be summarized by saying: "Good news, world in serious trouble, God is for us!" We can't see everything God is doing right now, but knowing the good He has done and the good He will do, we can trust him now in the midst of this groaning creation that He is still doing good. Even when you can't trace His hand, trust who He is.

Chapter Highlights

VS 29-30

God has "foreknown" us. Though God knows the end from the beginning, having infinite knowledge doesn't mean He causes everything. Creation has real choice, and it has chosen anything but Him. However, He will redeem the evil works of Satan and of humans and turn it all into something good. The church is the firstfruits of this foreknown plan, as we are a new kind of humanity redeemed from futility.

In this verse, foreknowledge and predestination are used in a broad sense, rather than speaking of individuals. To "predestinate" means to determine beforehand. Long ago, God declared the destiny of the new creation for an

unchangeable purpose: to be conformed to the likeness of the image of Christ. We were ruined by the fall in the likeness of Adam, yet God's plan was for those of faith to be made like unto the resurrected, heavenly man (I Corinthians 15:49). Jesus is the firstborn of many brothers who will also have a glorious spiritual body, and everything is following him into that incorruptible existence. All of this shows us that God is working good in stages (foreknowing, predestinating, calling, justifying, glorifying.) Since He has already accomplished the grandest work of turning evil into good, our perception of what is good should be defined by the presence of God Himself and not in temporary earthly things.

VS 31-32

In response to God's plan for us and knowing He is for us, we assert that nothing against us has power over us. Sin, Satan, death, trials, evilworkers, pressures, and anxious thoughts: all these enemies cannot come against us because they cannot come against God's purposes. The greatest picture of God being for us is seen in Christ bearing all our shame on the cross. Jesus was the only person who fully knew and loved God and the only one who didn't deserve death, yet God offered him for our sakes. This kind of love, to offer the only sinless Son in the stead of sinners and enemies is unfathomable divine love, beyond that of humans. This love which held nothing back is the primary evidence of all the goodness He will do for His children. So if He gave you Christ, don't be anxious for everything else. It's as if He is saying, **"I will not redeem you to leave you."**

VS 33-34

God has already justified us, and no one can overrule His favor. Nothing in our past is greater than the judgment of unconditional love God has already decreed. The work of Christ is finished: his death, his rising from the dead, his ascension to the right hand of God, and his presence before God making intercession for us. If you could undo all that, you could then be condemned before God with a guilty charge. But Jesus lives at the right hand of the supreme judge as a constant reminder that broken humanity is accepted at God's throne.

VS 35-39

The list of calamities in verse 35 begins with pressures and escalates to death. There are many kinds of sufferings we face, but the presence of suffering does not indicate that God is not with us. Distress, persecution, displacement from home, or even unjust murder cannot separate us from the love of Christ. When Romans was written, king Nero was killing Christians. Paul himself once removed Christians from their homes, forced them to deny the faith, and sentenced them to death. Facing affliction like that can cause people to wonder whether God really is good. Often it's when sufferings come on us personally that we are tempted to think that God is

not for us. But we can be of good cheer, because even though we will have tribulation in the world, Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33).

Hebrews 11 speaks of the great miraculous victories some have seen by faith, but it also tells of those who by faith have been persecuted unto death. Side by side, both are examples of faith. Peter, who was let out of jail by an angel, did not have more faith than James, who was beheaded. John the Baptist, who was murdered, did not do something wrong. God didn't leave Stephen, who was martyred, or simply love Peter more. The answer to all the injustice is that God will transform all evil to good. Even in his dying breath, Stephen knew the ultimate good of being with God and saw the glory of Jesus in resurrection. All will be vindicated when Jesus Christ returns in flaming fire taking vengeance. **The gospel is compelling because the victory of Christ soars above all suffering, not because every day is easy.**

Like the old hymn goes, **"The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever"**

Verse 36 quotes Psalm 44, which speaks of Israel being persecuted for honoring God. The portion of the righteous has always been suffering, but following the one who was led like a sheep to the slaughter, the glory will come. As verse 17 said, we are joint heirs with him both in sufferings and glory. In this hostile world, we will suffer for his name, but we can commit our souls to God as he did. Even if it gets worse first, it will get better. There is a greater gospel treasure we should esteem above all else.

Verse 37 rebuts all the suffering by saying that it's actually already conquered because Jesus lives. It's not just about "getting out" of pressure, but knowing that through it all, even if it doesn't immediately change or if we're still going through it, the resurrection of Christ has won. So we can have unshaken faith with patience.

Conclusion

Whether it looks like angel coming to let Peter out of prison, or like Paul strengthened to endure despite a persistent thorn in the flesh, or even like Stephen at the end of his life dying with eyes on eternal glory, we joy in God, persuaded by the truth that nothing can separate us from His love in Christ. We trust that God will continue to be good. We belong to Him, enlivened by the Spirit for all eternity. God is for us, and that truth changes everything!

Romans

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