

THE LOVE THAT NEVER LETS GO – Part 1

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Pastor Chris Micks - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

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This morning, I want to give you a word of encouragement. How many of you could stand a word of encouragement this morning? Something to strengthen and to fortify because we are in a long crusade. The Christian life is a marathon and there are times that we need to be recalibrated.

I find that in my own life. I need to recalibrate on a regular basis to lift our eyes again, get our eyes fixed on the great certainties of the Christian faith. Get ourselves fixed on Jesus and the promises that are in him. So I want to help us this morning from Romans chapter eight, starting at verse 31.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] 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? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] 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. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:31 – 39)

So Paul begins in verse 31 here with the statement or the question, **“What shall we say then to these things?”** What things is he talking about? Well, from chapter five of Romans all the way through chapter eight here, Paul has been writing to that church about the many wonderful truths of the gospel, the good news of Jesus.

And he comes to a crescendo here in chapter eight. And he says, what shall we say then in response to all these things? The gospel, the good news. But perhaps most specifically, he's referring to the several verses that come immediately before this passage.

If you were to go back earlier in the chapter to about verse 18, from Romans 18 to verse 30, Paul is writing about our adoption as sons and daughters of God. This is glorious. God has adopted us.

When you put your faith in Jesus Christ and begin to follow him, you were adopted as a child of God. And yes, we are passing through perils and difficulties, but we have the earnest, the Bible says, that word means the down payment. We have the engagement ring, if you want to put it that way, of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

He's the beginning of glory. He's the beginning of it all. We have his presence and we have heaven in our hearts because of his presence in our lives.

“What shall we say then to these things?” This adoption, this glorious presence. And Paul answers his own question with another question. In fact, a series of questions. And this question is a thought that should always stay planted in our hearts each and every day. And it's this, it begins with this. **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** If God is for us, who can be against us?

Now, how many of you recognize that's a rhetorical question? It doesn't even need to be answered, does it? It's obvious all by itself. If God is for us, there could not be any power that could withstand him and be against us. And in beginning this way, Paul launches into a series of four questions that we find here in these verses that we've read from verse 31 to 39. And I want to look at the four questions here with you this morning.

1) **QUESTION #1: WHO CAN OPPOSE US?**

Question number one, who can oppose us? Who can oppose us? **“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31b)** Now, does that mean we can never have anyone try to hinder us or attack us? No, not at all. It's blatantly obvious that we do face opposition as Christians.

Paul's point is that it cannot ultimately succeed, that God gives us the victory in life and in eternity. If God is for us, here's the question, who can be against us effectually? Who can actually pull it off to oppose us and be effective? With God on our side, how will our side possibly suffer defeat?

It's like the old pastor who had been preaching for years and years and years, but finally the ordination board decided it's time for them to credential him and give him his papers and ordain him. And so they brought him in and they gave him the dreaded ordination interview.

And in this interview, they sat him down, they put the lights on him and they asked him a series of questions. And finally they said this, “We want you to explain something about your theological positions.” And this old preacher said, “Well, God is good. The devil is bad. But I read the last chapter and we win. And I think that's pretty good.”

The victory is not in question. A wonderful verse for you to memorize would be Psalm 27 verse one, which says, **“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)**

Charles Spurgeon said, “Once you have stood in the presence of God, what on earth is going to frighten you?” So the answer to the question, who can oppose us is this, many may try, but God is for us. The Bible tells us that we are going to have enemies. Specifically, we are warned that we will be opposed by three things, the world and all its philosophies and ideas,

the flesh, even inside ourselves, there is that sin nature, that sin bias we inherited from Adam that we need to continue to deal with. So secondly, we will be opposed by the world and the flesh, and thirdly, the devil, by Satan.

Look at the phrase here, **“If God is for us.”** In the original Greek language, the word **“If”** there, **“If God is for us”**, really means “since God is for us”, or “because God is for us, who can be against us?” And how do we know how much God is really for us? Are we guessing?

Look at the next verse, Paul qualifies it, he tells us how we know and how much we know God is for us. Verse 32, **“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?” (Romans 8:32)**

This is how we know that God is for us, he gave up his own son. He has already given the greatest, the most costly, the dearest gift that he had to give. Anything else that we could ever need from God is lesser than what he has already been prepared to give. Whatever else that we need in life, he will surely supply. He has shown his intention that he is the unfailing, reasonless for us. He is for us.

Can you imagine a husband giving his wife a beautiful diamond necklace on their anniversary and she opens the box and she says, “Oh, sweetheart, thank you so much. I know that this was so expensive, thank you. And you know what? I even love the box. The box is so beautiful.” Imagine the husband then saying, “Oh no, you can't have the box. No, the box is mine. I want that box back.” Wouldn't it be ridiculous? When he gives you something as expensive as the diamond necklace, of course he'll give you the box. The box is nothing in comparison with the gift inside.

God has already given us the precious diamond, the unparalleled riches of his son. And now anything else he could ever give us is like the box that comes with the diamond. Everything else is so much less valuable than Jesus, he willingly and graciously gives us all things.

Thank God. But now I have to pause here and clarify something. Since God is for us, who can be against us effectually? That doesn't mean that God will necessarily take our side when we're wrong.

It doesn't mean that we can hijack God to endorse our favourite cause. People do this all the time in politics or sports, for instance, claiming God is on their side and not on the other guy's side.

If God is for us in the issue, then we have his strength and resources. But isn't it possible to have God for us in the ultimate sense, and yet perhaps not for us in our very peculiar opinion, our idea? Therefore, we need to be very careful to inquire of him and listen, to doubt ourselves regularly, staying humble before him lest we find ourselves fighting against him.

Remember in Acts chapter five, we read the story of a man by the name of Gamaliel (Ga-may-lee-all), who's actually one of the leading Jewish professors in the first century. He had been even the apostle Paul's instructor when Paul was still Saul and was a religious leader. Gamaliel was one of his teachers. This guy was a highly respected religious leader and professor.

The high priest and the council in Jerusalem thought God is with us. We can't be wrong. And in their opinions, they wanted to kill the apostles of Jesus as the enemies of God. "We've been God's leaders for a long, long time. These are just the new boys on the block. They're the coming and passing fad. God is with us."

So they were ready to kill the apostles. But wise old Gamaliel stood up and he said this.

"And he said to them: 'Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. ... (Lots of movements like theirs have come and gone before now.) [38] And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; [39] but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.' (Acts 5:35, 38-39 NKJV)"

You can feel that you're right so strongly, but we need to go to God's word about what he actually feels about things. Sometimes things are not black and white, they're gray. And we can find ourselves fighting against God. Gamaliel knew that it's possible to be God's people and yet miss his voice and end up striving against the cause that he's actually concerned about.

On the other hand, you can fight for a cause and believe that God is for you, so you must be right, but it's not his cause at all, so it's your own. I sometimes smile when I hear Christian sports fans, and they're talking about how God's blessing their team, because the quarterback is a bold Christian. You know that last time we won, he stood up and he talked about God, so God is blessing us. And then the team loses the Super Bowl.

And I always imagine the conversation between a sports fan and the Lord in their quiet time on Monday morning. You just imagine the Lord saying to somebody, "Hey, great game last night, man, you were excited." "Yeah, but Lord, we lost." "I know, too bad, next year, I guess." "Yeah, but you know, Lord, you could have helped us out, right? Because the quarterback is a believer. Remember, yeah, you could have just given a little nudge here and there and we would have won that game." "Yeah, but son, that would be cheating."

That might sound like a silly illustration, but I've heard Christians sometimes talking like God fixes everything for us. Listen, if your team wins, it won't be because so-and-so is a Christian and God was on his side. Christian athletes are on all teams. They all play in losing games many times in their careers. God never failed them on those occasions. The plan failed or the coach made a stupid call or the team was in a slump. That's the reality.

This text is not telling us that God is bound to give us success in every little issue that we decide to take on. No, it's far bigger than that. It's far more important than that. It's far more weighty than that.

God is on our side to complete his purpose in our lives, his purpose, to fulfill his plan for conquering evil and purging this creation from the effects of sin and bringing us gloriously into his presence where we will have joy forever and ever with him. God is with us and who can stop that? God is gloriously for us.

Are you wondering this morning if there's anyone left who actually believes in you? Are you feeling like the entire world is against you? Maybe even you feel your family's against you. Your friends are against you. Remember, God is for you. He's withheld nothing from you pertaining to your ultimate good. He loves you. You are safely included in what God is up to in this world.

So question number one, who can oppose us? The answer is many are going to try, but God is for us.

2) **QUESTION #2: WHO CAN ACCUSE US?**

Question number two, he then asked this question, "who can accuse us?" Who can accuse us? Verse 33 says, **"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." (Romans 8:33)**

Well, here is the answer. No one can bring any accusation because if we are in Christ, we have been fully justified by God. There is no basis for a conviction against us when we stand before God. Any charges now will be false charges. We are justified. We are exonerated. We are innocent on all counts of the sin debt which was weighing against us and bringing us under the wrath of God.

Now, it doesn't mean that a Christian can't be guilty of speeding and need to pay the fine, but what it means is when we stand before God, our lives are righteous because of what Jesus has done for us. Thank God, Satan cannot bring any charge against me today in the courtroom of God.

There was a time when it seems that he had such access. I don't know if you've ever read the book of Job. The whole scene begins with this account of how Satan went before God and said, you know that Job, who you're blessing, who looks so wonderful, he says, he's only following you because of what you're doing for him. He said he wouldn't be following you if you weren't giving to him all the time. And you remember there was all those troubles came into Job's life to test him, and yet he still trusted in God.

So there was a time when maybe the enemy could come and he could bring an accusation, but Jesus said on his way to the cross in John 12, verse 31, **“Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” (John 12:31)** As Jesus went to the cross, He was defeating every claim that Satan had against the people of God.

Now there is now a threshold of blood that bars the way to the presence of God. The blood of Jesus stops every accusation. The devil has no right to be there accusing me. Instead, Jesus alone is before the father pleading my case . Romans 8:34 says that He is interceding for me. Hallelujah!

Now think about what Paul is saying here. The issue is not whether accusations exist. The issue is whether any accusation can stand. Satan may accuse. People may accuse. Sometimes even our own hearts accuse us. There are moments when the enemy whispers, “Look at your failures. Look at your past. Look at all the ways you've fallen short.” But Paul asks, **“Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.” (Romans 8:33)** The highest Judge in the universe has already rendered His verdict. The case has been settled. The Judge has declared us righteous because of Jesus Christ.

If the Judge has already pronounced us justified, who can successfully appeal His decision? Who can overturn the verdict of Almighty God? There is no higher court. There is no greater authority. There is no prosecutor with new evidence to present. The blood of Jesus has already answered every charge that could ever be brought against us. Every sin was laid upon Christ at the cross. Every debt was paid in full. Every accusation was met by the declaration, “Paid in Full.”

That does not mean we live carelessly or ignore sin in our lives. When we fail, we confess our sins and walk in repentance before God. But there is a great difference between conviction and condemnation. The Holy Spirit convicts us so that we might be restored, but the devil condemns in order to drive us away from God. Conviction says, “Come back to the Father.” Condemnation says, “Stay away, there is no hope for you.” Thank God that Romans 8:1 declares, **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)**

So when the enemy points to my sin, I point to the cross. When he points to my failures, I point to the empty tomb. When he reminds me of my past, I remind him of his future. My confidence today is not in my own goodness, my own performance, or my own ability to keep myself saved. My confidence rests in the finished work of Jesus Christ. God has justified me, Christ is interceding for me, and therefore no accusation from hell can ever separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hallelujah!

Next week, we will look at Questions 3 & 4 found in our verses. Let's pray.