

Romans 8:31-39 *What, then, shall we say in response 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, along with him, graciously give us all things?* ³³ *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.* ³⁴ *Who then is the one who condemns? No one. 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.* ³⁵ *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.”* ³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, 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.*

How do you respond to the evils of this world?

1. If God is for us, who can be against us?
2. Who can separate us from the love of Christ?

Can you honestly say that God, in all things, is acting on your behalf? Can you truly say that God has given you all things? Are you confident of that when you analyze your financial situation? Are you confident that God is providing all you need when you look at your family life? Are there problems between you and your spouse? Are your teenage children drifting away? Are you confident of God’s providence when you look at your job situation? Are workforce cuts looming? Have you graduated college but can’t find a job in your field?

Are you confident of God’s care especially when you suffer for your faith? Are you ridiculed at work for what you believe? Are you shut out from some in your extended family because of your church?

How do you respond to the evils of this world? The early church was persecuted. Forced to flee from their homes, scattered in all directions, lost income, lost friends. Some were imprisoned, even brutally put to death. They were fed to the lions, forced to be gladiator fodder and treated as the scum of the earth.

During his life Martin Luther was declared a heretic and an outlaw. During the bloody 20th century more Christians were killed for their faith than in all previous centuries. There is, indeed, much evil in this world. How do you respond to the evils of this world?

Paul’s answer? *If God is for us, who can be against us?* With all this evil in the world, how can we say that God is for 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?* We know God is on your side because he did not spare his own Son. He did not hold back one stroke of the punishment due for sin. He did not spare him any of the pain, the terror, the suffering of hell. He unleashed it all on his Son. It wasn’t Judas or Pilate or the Jewish leaders who did this; it was God the Father.

When we think of the cross, we naturally think of Jesus. But have you ever thought about the suffering of God the Father? If you are a parent who has had to watch your child in pain, you understand how difficult that is. You would do nearly anything to make that pain stop. We know God is for us because he didn’t spare his Son, but gave him up for us all.

What does that tell us? *How will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* Is there anything that could cost God more than his own Son? Is there really anything good that God would withhold from us?

If God is for us, who can be against us? Paul’s question raises an absolutely dreadful possibility. What if God is *not* for us? God who created heaven and earth, who controls the sun and the stars, who sends hurricanes and earthquakes who hurls his lightning bolts – what if he turned that power on us? What if he is against us? And shouldn’t he be? We have broken every one of his commands. We mistreat his creatures in our callousness and lovelessness toward our neighbors. We complain about the weather. We put down the authorities God placed over us. Is there any reason God should not be against us?

But we go to the courtroom of God’s judgment and what do we find? *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.* ³⁴ *Who then is the one who condemns? No one.* As defendants in God’s courtroom we are guilty as we stand before the Judge. He has us “dead to rights.” We have no one to plead our case. We don’t even know how to plead because we aren’t fully aware of our guilt or the charges. We often feel defenseless before God and before the world.

But then in steps Jesus. *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.* Jesus steps in as our defense attorney and his defense is this: He stands in our place. He is convicted for our crimes, punished for our offenses. He is in the fullest sense our Intercessor, standing with us before the Judge. Jesus places himself between us and our accuser, between us and our death.

Therefore, God justifies us, that is, the Judge declares us not guilty. And if God has already declared us not guilty at the death of his Son, who can bring any charge against us? No one. Jesus stands in front of us with his nail-pierced hands held up to stop all the accusations against us. No one can point a finger at us. God has justified us.

If God is for us, who can be against us? And who can separate us from the love of Christ? *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?* Have you ever tried bungee jumping? I did something like it once. At Elitch Gardens Amusement Park in Denver, my son, Luke, talked me into going on this thing with him. They put you in a harness, connect the harness to a cable and hang you, belly down from this cable. Then they pull the cable way up about 150 feet. When you get to the top, they give you a count down and you pull the release lever. At that you free fall straight toward the ground until the cable tightens and you end up swinging 10 feet above the ground.

At first, I thought it would be fun, but up there with nothing holding me except that cable, my irrational mind was scared. I really had nothing to fear. The cable was strong; it wouldn't break. But my mind had trouble accepting that.

Life can be much like that. Life can seem like a free fall at times. It can seem like nothing is going right. Your parents ride you for sitting about your grades. Or you got a part-time job and you don't like it. The stock market slump may be sucking up your retirement funds or your kids' college money. Your health may be one bad thing after another.

Then there is the gnawing guilt from your fight with your parents or the fight with your spouse. Your conscience is bothering you because you said that you would pray more or read your Bible more and you haven't done it. With all of that, we can feel like losers and we can wonder if God loves us, if God could love us.

Paul quotes from Psalm 44. *As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."* The picture here is a reference to the sheep who were kept for sacrifice in the temple. Hundreds of animals were sacrificed on a daily basis. Those animals were kept near Bethlehem. They were not allowed to mate, to run free or any of that. They were kept for one purpose, to be slaughtered in the Temple. They existed for no other purpose than to be sacrificed.

Is that what we are? Are we just sheep to be slaughtered, destined for a life of trouble?

If you are looking at your life for evidence that the victory of heaven is yours or that God loves you, you're looking in the wrong place. God does not promise us heaven on the way to heaven. But he does promise us victory. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* We conquer and more. We over-conquer. Paul made up a new word to express the great victory we have through him who loved us. We don't just survive, we win heaven. We don't just win heaven; we have victory right now. Right now, we are the winners in the world.

And so, we can say with Paul, *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, 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.* We are slaughter sheep who follow the Lamb, a Lamb who was slain. We can face facts. We can face the fact that we are weak on our own. We can face the fact that we will have troubles in life. We can face the fact that there are powerful enemies trying to separate us from God. We can face the fact that the world is bound to crucify whatever is of God. But we can face all that with a clear-eyed faith, and look to the future with a firm confidence. We are more than conquerors!

Jesus has gripped me with his love and will never let me go! No one and nothing can separate me from him. Not the cold grey hand of death. *"No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from his hand."* (CWS 752:4) Nothing that may trouble me in this present moment. Nothing that may lurk for me in my future. No exalted height of joy; no sadness and woe, however deep. Because of that love I cry defiance and say, *"I am more than a conqueror.* This will not overwhelm me. This cannot overpower me. I will fight on with my Jesus by my side! He will never leave me! He will never forsake me! He will never let me go! In Jesus, we are more than conquerors!

If God is for us, that's the only way to respond to the evils of this world.