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Who then is the one who condemns no one? Christ Jesus, who died more than that, was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Would you pray with me, Father? God, as we come to this moment in our service, help open our hearts and open our minds that we would be ready to hear what the Spirit has to say to our hearts, that we'd hear the words that Sean is sharing to us with us. From your word, Father, help us to be open, to be ready to be intrigued by what and where you're leading us.

It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Jim. Good morning, everybody.

It's good to see you all here this morning. So one of the things you probably noticed as Jim was reading our text this morning is that Paul asks a lot of questions in these passages that we're looking at today, and they're what's known as, like, rhetorical questions. Paul was a master at asking rhetorical questions. We see it all throughout Romans, but we also see it all throughout the books and letters that he wrote to the early church. And you know who else is a master at rhetorical questions?

Our parents. Parents are excellent at asking questions that they don't want an answer to. They just want to make a point. My parents were good at it. I feel like, you know, I've kind of developed as a parent in asking rhetorical questions.

And so maybe you have asked or heard some questions like this. Um, were you born in a barn? Like, if somebody asks you that question, they're not wondering if you were born in a barn. They're wondering, why did you leave the door open when you ran outside of the house? Why is your room such a pigsty?

Were you born in a barn? Someone may ask the question, is the Pope Catholic? And they're not wondering, I wonder if the Pope is Catholic. They're wondering, like, of course the answer is yes. Why would you even question that?

Maybe you've had somebody ask you before, are you crazy? And they're not wondering about, like, the state of your mental health. They're wondering, like, what would lead you to make a decision like that? Are you crazy? Maybe you heard someone ask you this morning as you were getting ready for church, could you go any slower?

They're not wanting you to. They're wanting you to kind of speed up.

You're putting barbecue sauce on that. I like barbecue sauce. And some people can be very judgy in their questions about what I put barbecue sauce on.

Do you think that money grows on trees? Somebody asks you that question, they're like, why are you spending so much money? It doesn't just come to us, right? Do bears? Well, you get the points.

All right. So these rhetorical questions that we ask, we're not asking them out of curiosity. We're asking them to make some kind of a point. Like. Like somebody's not going to nervously ask you, do.

Do you think that I was born yesterday? Because I'm not really sure. Was I born yesterday? No. They say it like a statement.

Do you think that I was born yesterday? Like, you're not going to pull this over on me. And the Apostle Paul, who wrote the book of Romans and 2/3 of the New Testament, he was a master at asking rhetorical questions. We know that the book of Romans, Christian scholars kind of agree on this. It is a theological masterpiece.

It captures all of scripture from Genesis through Revelation in one book. And we've kind of seen how it does that in just this one chapter that we've been looking at over the last eight weeks. But Christian and non Christian scholars alike agree that Romans isn't just a thing theological masterpiece. It is a literary masterpiece. Paul had all of these literary tools in his tool belt, and he pulls almost every single one of them out as he is writing this letter to the church in Rome.

And people look at this and are marveled at the way that Paul used things like rhetoric, which was a predominant literary style, and green Romo Roman literature. He uses this all throughout the book. And when he uses it, he uses it to really make a point. He poses this rhetorical question. He assumes the answer that people are going to think when they read that question.

And then he uses that assumption to really drive home his point. And so Paul uses this style as a way of engaging his readers and his listeners and to make them a part of the dialogue. And so if you have your Bibles open, let's look at it again. We'll have the words up on the screen and just take note of how many rhetorical questions Paul asks in these verses that we're looking at today. And so he starts in verse 31.

What then shall we say in response to these things? And this first question that Paul asked. He actually asked it as a transition. He asked this question six different times in the book of Romans. And he uses it to kind of transition from what he just taught to the point he's wanting to make.

And so this very first question that we read in our passage for today is this. What then shall we say in response to these things? Everything that Paul, this case that he has been building, that we've looked at over the last seven weeks, Paul's about ready to summarize it all up and hit it home. And so he asked this question as a transition. What can we say?

And he goes on and he says, if God is for us, who can be against us? And I think what he wants us to do is to read that question and not go, oh, man, okay, if God is for us, well, let's start making a list of the people that can be against us. That's not what Paul is wanting to do. He wants us to immediately respond, no one. If God is for us, who can be against us?

No one can. Verse 32. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he also, along with him, graciously give us all things? It's a little clunky, but as Paul has talked over these last several paragraphs about how we've been adopted into God's family. We've been called sons and daughters of the king, we are co heirs with Christ.

Thinking about everything that God has done to make us his own beloved child. He wants us to think about this and be like, yeah, God, this giver of every good and perfect gift, is not going to withhold his gifts from us. He's not going to hold back from his children. Verse 33. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? No one.

It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? And then here Paul answers his own rhetorical question, no one. Then he closes with this. Christ Jesus, who died no more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

In this section, Paul asks these big, bold, audacious questions. Not out of curiosity. He asks them as a punctuation point. He asks these questions as a crescendo to the truth that he has just got done, laying out, not just in Romans chapter 8, but really all the way back from Romans chapter 5. Up until here, Paul is using these questions to drive home his point that there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

That is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In his book into the heart of Romans, N.T. Wright, who has really spent his life and his career as a theologian studying the book of Romans and Romans 8 in particular. This is what he writes about this section. He says.

Here, Paul dramatically tells the story of Jesus in miniature. God's Son, not spared, crucified, risen, ascended, and now interceding for his people at the Father's right hand. Like this is the Gospel

summarized in one statement. You, you, you, you brush through and away all of the questions, all of the rhetoric, and you get this clear message that Paul wants us to understand, right? Concludes only here in all of his writings does Paul offer such a complete summary of the Jesus story in all of his letters.

Here in these verses, Paul summarizes the Gospel in the most succinct way that he does in all of his writings. And this gospel story is a story that it does not matter how many times we have heard, does not matter how many times we have shared it with others. And we. I still need to be reminded of it over and over and over. So this morning I just want to do that.

I want to remind us about this Jesus story. And I've shared this before, and I want to kind of go to it again because I think it's such a great visual of the gospel message and kind of telling the gospel story in three circles. And so in this first circle, what we find is that God designed his world to be good. He designed it to be perfect. God's design was for us to be in perfect relationship with him, perfect relationship with others, perfect relationship within ourselves.

This is how God designed this world. There was no brokenness. There was no pain, there was no death, there was no cancer. There's none of that. God's design was good.

But what we do is we come along and we look at God's design and we say, no, God, I'm gonna go my own way and I'm gonna do my own thing. And anytime we step out of God's design, that's what we call sin. Sin is this thing inside of us that says, God, I know what you want me to do, but I don't want to do it. Or, I know what you don't want me to do, but I want to do it. And anytime we step out of God's design, we step into sin.

And sin always, always, always leads to brokenness. It leads to brokenness in our relationship with God. It leads to brokenness in our relationship with others. We think we're going to go our own way, we're going to do our own thing, and it's going to be okay. And oftentimes we get to the end of that and we realize, oh, no, it's not that.

God's way is good and right. And out of our brokenness, we try to find something that can alleviate the pain that we feel from it. We try to fix it ourself. And so we reach out and we grab onto a relationship thinking that this other person can somehow make me feel whole, this other person can close this gap that I feel in myself. But when we rely on another person to give us what they were never intended to give us, man, it's only going to lead to more pain.

And we're feeling this pain and this brokenness, and we don't want to

feel it. And so sometimes we try to numb it. We try to avoid it. We try to escape those dark places in our soul and our minds, those places that we don't want to think about. We turn to an addiction to alcohol, to pornography.

We turn to something that's gonna try to alleviate us temporarily from that pain of brokenness. But the truth is that anytime we try to find relief from this in ourselves, reaching for these things, it only snaps us right back into. Only leads to more brokenness and pain. And we know this. And there is nothing that we could do about our sin.

And so God, in his grace and in his mercy, did something for us. He sent Jesus. Jesus came and he lived the perfect life of God's design that we could not live. He showed us what it was like to live in perfect harmony with God, with others. He came to restore what sin had broken.

God sent his son, did not spare his own son. Jesus went to the cross and he ascended back into heaven. It is this gospel message that Paul wants us to see in these verses that we're looking at today. And when we put our faith in Jesus, we are brought into right relationship with God. And we do that through repentance, by returning from the direction that we were going, turning from, going our own way and saying, no, God, I'm gonna go your way.

We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, that he laid his life down for us. We die to ourselves in the watery grave of baptism. And we come up to new life. And we experience the grace of God through Jesus. And then in this relationship with Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to form us back into the way that God designed us.

We become who we were meant to be, who God made us to be. And it doesn't just stop with us. Then God sends us back out into this broken world to go and to tell others to share this good news that we have received through Christ. And so God's design, our brokenness, Jesus rescuing us, us being sent to go back out into the brokenness of this world. This is the gospel kind of told in three circles.

And what I found in my life and in talking with so many people is that we believe all of this and we believe all of this. And we believe that only through Jesus can we be saved. And we believe all of these things. But what we have a really hard time holding onto and trusting is that God could still love us.

We have a really hard time believing that when we navigate back into our brokenness and we search for hope and healing in ourselves, we turn to past addictions, we turn to relationships. We. We find ourselves back in our sin. We have a hard time believing that we're still forgiven and set free from it. We have a hard time believing that God could still love us, that he's shaping us back into who we

were meant to be.

And we question.

We question, could God love me? We believe God's son, not spared, crucified, risen, ascended. We believe all of these things up to the point where we continue to struggle in our sin. And we think, man, there is no way that God could accept me. There's no way that God could love me.

We struggle to live in the freedom of grace. We struggle to embrace the rich truths of this chapter that we have been looking at.

And we ask ourselves our own rhetorical question, which is, how could God love someone like me?

How could God love someone like me? And our answer to this question is, he can't.

Because we don't have a category in our minds for what unconditional love looks and feels like. We don't have this category for God's embracing of us, even in our imperfections, this category of God making us perfect in Christ even as he is making us holy. And so we ask this question to ourselves in those moments of pain and darkness when we slip back into who we used to be. And we ask, how can God love so someone like me? And our only response is, he can't.

But when we ask this question, God's answer to you is, no, Jesus. Jesus. Through Jesus, there is now no condemnation. Through Jesus, you have been justified. You have been made.

Just as if you have never sinned through Jesus Christ. When God looks at you, he no longer sees who you used to be and even who you still are. At Times he sees Jesus. Through Jesus you have been forgiven and set free. Through Jesus you will one day be glorified.

Through Jesus, nothing and no one can separate the way that God feels about you and separate you from the love of Jesus.

So we look again at verses 33 and 34, and we hear Paul's rhetorical question. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? No one. It is God who justifies. It is God, the righteous judge, who has declared you innocent.

And it's not because you are, is because Jesus has already paid the price. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. No one. And Satan tries his best to throw accusation after accusation against you.

He tries to bring up old stuff or even recent stuff and be like, God, how can you love someone like this? And God's like, because I decided

I was going to, Because I've already declared her innocent and set free. Because when I look at him, I don't see that moment. I see Jesus. And there is nothing that is going to separate me from my love and what I've already decided.

He sees Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us, declaring our innocence because of our faith in his shed blood and his body that was given for us to. To rescue us. That is why Paul says, it is God who justifies. When you are in Christ, listen, God has already made up his mind about you. You are forgiven and set free.

He has forever declared you innocent and set free from your sin. Even when there are times when we go back to does not change the way that God feels about you. And nothing can change that.

When I graduated from high school, I graduated youngest kind of my class, close to it. I didn't turn 18 until July. And so that summer, most of it, I was still 17 years old. And my summer job after high school was to work at Menards in Carmel. If you've ever been up on the north side of INDY There on 31, there's the Menards kind of tucked back just a little bit.

And that was my summer job. I worked in floor coverings, selling carpet. I had no business doing that, but they put me in there, and so that's what I did. And one Saturday night I got off work and wanted to head home and hang out with friends. And so I got in my car and I started driving north on 31.

We lived in Cicero, so I had to go up north and. And then take 236 over. And when I was driving, I got stopped at a stoplight and a Friend of mine pulled up next to me at that stoplight and kind of revved his engine, which is the universal sign for want to race. And I'm 17 years old and that whole prefrontal cortex had not fully developed. I'm like, that sounds like a good idea.

Let's go. And so the light turns green and we gun it and we're flying up 31, cutting around traffic, trying to race each other to two. 36, I guess. And I look at my rear view mirror and I see a cop pull over in the median and start to chase us. Whoop, lights come on.

And I get pulled over. And the officer, I guess I didn't know that this was a thing. I don't know if it still is, but because I was 17, the officer actually called my parents and said, hey, I just pulled Sean over. He was, you know, going pretty fast, driving pretty recklessly. I'm going to have to give him a ticket.

And I remember my dad said that on the. Over the phone. He's like, officer, let me deal with him this time. Let me deal with him. You give him to me the next time he's yours.

And then the police officer was like, I'm sorry, I can't. He was just going too fast, driving too reckless. And so I got a ticket and got home and, you know, experienced a little bit of replica consequences because of that. And so I had a little bit of a curfew. But that week I turned 18.

And that next Saturday, I went over to a friend's house and we were celebrating my 18th birthday. And I looked at the clock, I'm like, oh, no, I'm supposed to be home. I'm gonna get in trouble. And he lived about 15 minutes away. And so I got into my car and I was speeding again down this country road.

And I come up over a little hill and right there just met a cop. And I'm like, oh, man. Well, the 8 o' clock didn't get this version of the story. I'll tell you guys. This road that my friend Mark lived off of, we had always.

I mean, again, it's out in the middle of nowhere. And we'd actually had the conversation. If you were being chased, what would you do? And like, oh, I think this road, you hit that and you go up towards, like, you can, like, probably flee. And so, again, not developed.

The cop is going down the hill, and I'm like, I think I might be able to. And so I turn right, I'm heading north up towards Tipton, Cicero south. And he sees me, he pulls me over, and he's like, where are you going? Said home. He's like, where's home?

Cicero. Why are you heading north? I don't have a good answer for that. And so, of course, I got another ticket. But I was 18, so my parents didn't know about that one.

So the day of my first court date comes, and my dad kind of says, hey, we're going to use that same argument. All right, I'll just say, judge, let. Let me have them this time. You can have them on the next time. And it's like, yeah, Dad, I should probably tell you something.

I got another ticket. He's like, oh, he was so angry at me. So angry. And so dad could have very well just gone into the courtroom and pled with the judge. Please, Judge, I know my boy is stupid.

I know he made some really dumb decisions. I know that he's guilty. He had no. I mean, just. But please, would you.

Would you let him off the hook? Well, the judge would have no, like, reason to let me off the hook for that. And he didn't. To be fair, he did not. But flip the script just a little bit.

And this is kind of the point that I want to make. Imagine that we walk into the courtroom, and my dad is dragging me before the judge. He's angry, and he puts me up in front of him, and he's like, give him



everything you've got. Throw the book at him. Like, he was reckless, he was irresponsible, he was immature, and he needs to learn a lesson right now so that he doesn't do this again.

Judge, give him everything that you've got. And the judge looks at him and says, listen, I know what he did. I've seen the evidence. I know that he's guilty. But someone has already paid the penalty for him.

And I am going to let him off of it. Does not matter how much my dad says, no, you need to give it to him, how much he reminds the judge of what I deserve. If the judge who has the power to condemn me or set me free has already made up his mind about me, there is nothing, nothing that can change that. Nothing. And God, the righteous judge, has already made up his mind about you.

If you are in Christ, you are forgiven and set free. God has already decided it. And it's not because you are perfect, and it's not because you are always going to get it right. It is because of your faith in Jesus. It is through Jesus, who bore the weight of our sin on the cross.

So that we no longer have to be condemned by it. The Apostle Paul says in Romans, chapter 5, verse 1. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. God has already decided. You are right with him.

You are at peace with him. When you put your faith in Jesus, Paul says that you are made new. You are made just as if you have never sinned. He declares you innocent and set free. You are at peace with the righteous judge because he decided that's what he wanted for you.

And there is no accusation from Satan that can change that. You are now and forever a dearly loved child of God. And that is the message of Romans chapter 8. It is the message of Romans Church. It is the message of the entire book of Scripture.

And so what then shall we say? What then shall we say in response to all of these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? No one. Let me ask you, what then shall we say in response to all of these things?

If God is for you, who can be against you? Let me hear you. No one. If God is for you, church, who can be against you? You?

No one. The cross declares that God is for you. The cross declares that God is for you. He is not against you. He loves you.

Why would God go to all of this length to show you the depths of his love, to make a way for you to be justified and at peace with him, and then come to a point and said, yeah, it covers everything but that or

no, sorry, it's run out. Why would God do that? He wouldn't. He wouldn't. And I think that we want to believe that this is true, but our problem is that we know ourselves too well.

And we know that judges don't let guilty people off the hook. And we know how we treat people who hurt us. And. And so we take all of these things and we just assume that that's the way that God feels about us as well. And we wonder if the good news of God's grace can be real for us too.

A couple of weeks ago, during the 11 o' clock service, we were kind of going through a time of prayer and reflection. And I stepped back and Quentin told me the news that our high school minister, Matt, had passed away.

And we were kind of in the moment of wondering, okay, what do we do? And how do we address this? And our high schoolers were they attend the 11 o'? Clock? A lot of them do.

And I just felt like, okay, I think we need to say something. And so I stepped up right here and shared the news and. And I was just kind of speaking in the moment and processing as I was talking. And that can be a dangerous thing to do sometimes.

I don't remember everything that I said in that moment, but I remember one thing. I remember that there was a time where I was talking about the hope that we have in heaven and that it is real and that we. That we experience the beauty of the realness of heaven in moments like these. And I was processing and I said almost to myself underneath my breath, but was enough to be caught in the mic, and I just said, oh God, please, please let it be real.

And there was a gentleman who sits in the back row middle who shouted out, it is Sean.

And those words blessed me so much, I've hung on to those over the last couple of weeks. It is real. What we read in this book is real. And you may be sitting here today thinking, I want to believe that God loves me. I want to believe that I can be at peace with him, that.

That I can be forgiven and I can be set free. But I know myself, I know where I've been, I know what I've done. Please let this be real. And what I just want to shout to you, lovingly shout to you this morning is, it is real. It is all real.

Christ Jesus, who died no more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God in interceding for us. Who then can condemn us? No one who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen. It is God who justifies he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also along for him, along with

him graciously give us all things, what then shall we say in response to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? No one. Jesus. Thank you. Thank you for the truth of that, even when we don't feel it.

Thank you. That there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thank you for these eternal promises and assurance that we can hold on to, to Lord. If there's anybody here today that is struggling and wondering, is this real? Oh, Lord, it doesn't matter what I say, God.

May you, through your Holy Spirit, whisper to them, it is. It is.

It is.

May we live in the freedom of that.

In Jesus name, amen. If you're here today and you are wondering, is this real for me? And we want to let you know it is, if you're ready to step out and to experience that love and that grace, to give your life to Christ, to start following him, to die, to your old self, to be made new. And we'll have people with lanyards around the room that would love to just come alongside of you and help you make that choice or just want to talk or pray. I would love to do that, too.

If you're in Christ and you're thinking, I just want to believe that it is real for me, man. Just ask them and invite you to pray for them, for you. And communion is a chance for us to remember that it is not by anything that we have done or haven't done that we have saved. And so there's nothing that we can do or can't do that's going to take us from it. It is Jesus who gave Himself for us.

And through his life, death and resurrection and our faith in it, God has made up his mind about you. You are his beloved. You are his child. We remember that and we celebrate as we take the bread that represents his body that was given and we drink the cup. Help us remember his blood that was shed.

So in these next few moments, let's take some time to remember, man. It's real and it's good news for us.