

“If God Is for Us”

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Romans 8:31–34

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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.

At the opening of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul begins by saying that he was “set apart for the gospel of God” and called as an apostle (1:1). In 1:15 he also says, “I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome,” explaining that he writes this letter in order to proclaim the gospel—the good news.

Paul says something similar in another letter, the Second Epistle to Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:8 (NIV)

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.

The gospel that Paul teaches is Jesus Christ Himself. He says, “Remember Jesus Christ,” who is the center of the gospel. And according to the gospel he preaches, Jesus Christ is the One who was born as a descendant of David and raised from the dead.

This year again we have entered Advent. As we keep in our hearts Jesus Christ, who was born at Christmas as a descendant of David and as our Savior, I would like us to turn our hearts to the gospel message that Paul proclaims.

What is the gospel Paul proclaims? First, Paul states clearly in chapter 3:

Romans 3:10

“There is no one righteous, not even one.”

He says that all people are sinners. We are sinners from the moment we are born. We are born as sinners.

However, Paul does not end there, but continues.

Romans 5:19 (NIV)

through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Paul says that we do not somehow become righteous by our own effort, nor can we ever make ourselves righteous by anything we do. Though we are helpless in ourselves, there is one and only one way for us to become righteous:

“Through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

There is a way for us to be justified. All people are sinners, rebelling against God and doing unrighteousness.

However, “through the obedience of the one man”—that is, through the obedience of Jesus Christ—there is a way for us to be made righteous. Jesus Christ is the Righteous One, and to those who believe in Him God gives His righteousness.

Paul says that we are descendants of Adam and have inherited Adam’s sin. Just as Adam and Eve broke God’s command in the Garden of Eden and sinned, so we too are born as sinners, rebelling against God and committing sin. And all who sin are destined to die.

However, through the obedience of Jesus Christ, when we are united with Him by faith—He who obeyed God—our sins are forgiven and we are connected to the righteousness of God and to eternal life.

Though all humanity inherits the sinful condition that came from Adam’s fall, those who believe in Jesus Christ are able to partake, through the obedience of Christ, in the grace, peace, and joy that the Lord God gives.

Those who believe that Jesus Christ was born as the Savior for us—sinful and death-bound people—are enabled to live the new life given by faith. No longer “slaves to sin,” we are now able

to live as “slaves to righteousness.” This is the gospel that Paul proclaims. We are no longer under the law that condemns us, but under the grace of God who forgives our sins and gives life.

Paul says:

Romans 6:14 (NIV)

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Formerly, we were completely ruled by sin—covered in sin, bound by sin, rebelling against God, devising evil, doing evil, always thinking wrongly, missing the mark, entirely unable to do what is right.

Paul himself struggled because of sin.

Romans 7:18–20 (NIV)

18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

We also, like Paul’s confession, must admit that although we desire to do what is good and right and what God desires, we find ourselves unable to do it.

In daily life we end up thinking mainly about ourselves. Rather than others, we act for ourselves; forgetting God, we become like gods to ourselves. Before we know it, we are doing not the good we wished but acting selfishly and doing evil.

We confess, “Sin dwells in me,” and must acknowledge that we are powerless against sin.

However, Paul did not despair at “There is no one righteous, not even one,” but found hope. Because the human being bound by sin is set free from sin’s bondage and receives freedom and life through Jesus Christ. Paul found the only perfect solution.

Romans 8:1 (NIV)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

In chapter 8 Paul reflects on the future judgment. He asks: Who will bring a charge against God’s chosen people?

Yet whatever may happen, considering the fact that Jesus Christ—who was born as our Savior, bore our sins, died on the cross, and rose again—is now at the right hand of God and is interceding for us, Paul concludes that no one can accuse God’s people (vv. 31–36).

Paul speaks with full assurance:

Romans 8:37–39 (NIV)

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.

When Paul wrote this letter, mid–1st-century Rome was the political, economic, and cultural center in the Mediterranean coastal region. Diverse ethnic groups and ideas coexisted, and emperor worship, polytheism, and pagan culture were pervasive. In such Rome, even before Paul’s visit, there already existed a church made up of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

Christians whom Paul had met in other churches during his missionary journeys were now living in Rome and had become members of that church.

We also, just as Rome was, are made to live in an age in which politics, economy, and culture have developed. At the same time, diverse ideas overflow, and without believing in the true God,

we are made to live in a world where the economy is central and human beings are central. In such a situation, we want once again to turn our eyes to the gospel Paul teaches and to Jesus Christ.

We are loved by Jesus Christ, saved from sin, and made to live in a new life. With that assurance, I desire to be one who lives my life now, in this time.

1. If God is for us (Calling)

Romans 8:31

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Paul questions himself and answers with firm assurance, “God is for us.”

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things?” he says. The gospel which Paul has been speaking throughout this letter is the premise. In the immediately preceding verse, verse 30, it is said:

Romans 8:30

“Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

Paul is speaking of the gracious work of God who saves all humankind. He says that God is the One who predestines, calls, justifies, and glorifies. The subject of all these is God. The salvation of humankind is what God does. And it is spoken of as something that has already surely happened. To that degree the saving work is certain. It is already determined. God has promised that He will give us glory.

He says, “God is for us.” From eternity past, within His plan, He has loved us, and through the cross and resurrection of Christ has placed us under His own rule, and He continues to keep us until the time of the end-time glory. In the past, now, and from now on, God is for us.

To such ones as us, “who can be against us?” No one can be against us. We are weak and are defeated by any power—by the power of evil, by any temptation. Yet no matter how powerless we ourselves may be, God takes our side. And not we, but the Lord God is the One who wins the victory.

If God is for us, we can answer with assurance that no one can be against us.

Not by our deeds, not by our will, not by our ability, not by our potential, but beyond my power, beyond my thoughts, beyond my understanding—this is the expression of absolute assurance toward the great plan of God.

If God loves us, chooses us, calls us, justifies us, and gives us glory, then who could stand against us? No—no one can, and we can answer this with firm assurance.

God is indeed guiding us. And by faith we can know this. God guides us, and we walk that way. God spoke to Adam, who had sinned:

“Adam, where are you?” God was not calling out because He did not know where Adam was. Rather, God was seeking to save Adam. He was seeking to lead Adam. And He was expecting Adam’s response.

But just as Adam was, we hide ourselves, we run away, and we do not try to follow God.

However, even so, God is on our side, and He provides the way of salvation. God calls out to me. He calls my name and speaks to me, and He seeks to save me—this very me—and to lead me out.

He leads me from darkness into light. There is a power that tries to lead us into darkness. It is the power of our sin and the power of evil.

Yet we hear the voice of the Lord, saying, “Where are you?” And then, saying, “I was wrong. I committed wrong,” we can acknowledge our wrong and our sin, and repent, confessing that the way the Lord leads is the right way.

We no longer live our lives according to our own thoughts, nor do we walk according to our own ways, but hearing the Word of the Lord, being led by the Lord, we can begin to walk in the way of the Lord. And our lives are changed.

The Lord is the One who calls out to us, seeks to bring us out, and leads us. He is the One who saves us, who delivers us, and then guards us, leads us, and gives us grace.

1 Peter 2:10 (NIV)

“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

When we were walking in our own ways, we were anxious. Trying to hide our anxiety, trying to cover it up, we lived our own version of life.

But when we encounter Jesus, who was born as our Savior, we are filled with joy. Not hiding, not covering up, but confessing all our sins, acknowledging our helplessness, simply clinging to the love of God and receiving His mercy—when we entrust everything to the Lord, then we are assured of salvation and filled with joy. That is the gospel and that is faith.

And we are united with the Savior, Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:9 (NIV)

“God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

To us who have fellowship with Jesus Christ, everything is given.

2. “Along with His Son, all things” (Justification)

Romans 8:32 (NIV)

“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?”

“The God who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all” is the God who stands on our side. The Lord God “did not spare” but gave us the Savior, His Son, Jesus Christ.

The words Paul uses about God are also the words God used to Abraham. God said to Abraham, “You have not withheld from me your son, your only son” (Genesis 22:16). Abraham loved God more than his beloved son. That was the expression of his faith—his giving everything to God, obeying God, living for God.

But even the father of faith, Abraham, was not actually required to offer his son. For God as well, giving His only Son over to the cross for the sins of humanity must have been unbearable suffering. The fact that the Son was handed over to death shows that *everything* has been given to us.

There is God who sent His Son into this world for us and “gave him over to death.” “Gave him over to death” also expresses God’s judgment. The judgment that we should receive for our sins—Jesus received it in our place.

Just as Abraham offered his son, expressing his love for God, so the Lord God offered His Son, Jesus, expressing His love for us. He does everything for us. He gives us everything. He gives us forgiveness of sins and new life, and He blesses our lives with all that He is. The great love of the Lord God is there.

The love of God revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ is what makes the believer’s assurance firm. Because God loves us to such an extent, surely He will give us all things along with His Son. This is Paul’s logic, and this is the assurance of our faith.

Romans 5:6–9 (NIV)

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”

We can have assurance through faith. Since God loves us, since He gives us everything, since He gave us Jesus Christ, we can be assured of salvation and live with joy.

One hundred-year-old Abraham, whose physical strength had declined and who had no seeming hope for the future, was strengthened in faith and believed that God would certainly accomplish what He had promised.

Abraham was told, “I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky,” and though he could not understand how such a thing could happen, he believed because the Lord God had spoken it.

To believe the promises of God means that, although we can do nothing by our own power and have nothing left to hope for, if the Lord God promises it, then surely it will be so.

Even that faith is given by God. Just as Abraham’s whole life was in the leading of the Lord and continually supported by His power, the Lord God gives us everything we need for our lives. Entrusting everything to the Lord—that is the life of those who are justified by God.

3. He is interceding for us (Glorification)

Romans 8:33 (NIV)

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.”

“To bring a charge” means to accuse, a term that evokes the courtroom of God’s judgment. It is in the future tense, referring to the judgment to come. But we who are chosen by God can never be accused.

“Those whom God has chosen,” “God who justifies,” “God, God”—the emphasis is repeated. Not “I,” not “you,” not “we,” but God. “God chooses us,” “God justifies us.”

It means being brought into a right relationship with God—“justified by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 2:16)—saved from sin and brought into right relationship with Him. God, as our ally, is always with us, and we turn our hearts to Him who is with us.

Romans 8:34 (NIV)

“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.”

“Who condemns us?”—to condemn is to declare guilty. But no one can pronounce believers guilty.

“Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised”—because of the work accomplished by the Savior, and because even now the risen Jesus is living and interceding for us in heaven, we cannot be condemned.

Jesus Christ, born on that first Christmas 2000 years ago, as the merciful and great High Priest, offered Himself to God as a spotless sacrifice (Hebrews 9:14), rose on the third day, sat at the right hand of God, and now carries out His priestly ministry.

This is the gospel. The good news.

The *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question 49, asks: “How does Christ’s ascension into heaven benefit us?”

The first answer is: “He is our advocate in heaven in the presence of His Father.” The heavenly Father is the Judge who is fiercely angry at sin. But now, the Savior Jesus Christ was born for us and is in heaven.

The One who gave His life and made atonement for sinful people like us sits at the right hand of God and performs the work of the High Priest. The One who was born on earth, who knows every human suffering, every worry, every sickness, and all my sins—this One bears everything, stands on my side, and even now, at this very moment, intercedes for me.

We who believe in the Savior Jesus Christ and are justified live within the intercession of Jesus. Such a life is a life that leads to blessing. It is not a life of judgment but a life that receives eternal life. We who were sinners are forgiven, purified, and are being transformed into those worthy of receiving eternal life. Jesus is interceding in our walk, and He is leading us.

Paul said, “Keep Jesus Christ in mind,” “If God is for us, who is the one who condemns us?” “Christ Jesus, who died—no, rather, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who also is interceding for us.”

Keeping Jesus Christ in mind, let us desire to spend Advent.