

Ministry of Grace Church

Romans 8:33-39 - Your choice or His?

Sermon Notes



Background

Last time we were together, we ended with Paul's rhetorical question,

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

And, as we learned last time, the obvious answer is, "No one!"

In light of all of the wonderful things He has done for us, it is obvious that God is a loving father to each one of us. And, as if responding to the neighbor kid claiming that his dad is bigger, or stronger, or smarter than ours, Paul knows that our Father is greater than anyone or anything that may stand against us. Therefore, be courageous, because "*If God is for us, who is against us?*"

We know from other passages of Scripture that God is Almighty, that is, He's All Powerful. No one is more powerful than God (our father is stronger than their dad). But - just because He can do anything to protect us and defend us doesn't mean that He will make our lives full of ease and prosperity. In fact, because He is all-knowing, He knows what things will make us more Christ-like. He knows that times of trial and difficulties in our lives will make us stronger.

Now we are about to learn an even greater truth about our God. Not only is he the Father who has adopted us, but His Son is our legal counselor. In other words, we are represented by the greatest defense attorney of all.

Romans 8:33-34

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Paul now continues with his volcanic eruption regarding the benefits of being God's children. The first thing we learned is that God is Almighty and He will do all to protect us and bless us because we are His adopted children. In other words, we are safe from any evil force. But, if our enemy can't get to us by force, he will try to get to us by subtlety. He will accuse us of unrighteousness, which makes us feel unworthy to be God's children. That's what Paul is addressing in the current verses. Notice Paul's play on words here. He says, "**Who shall bring a charge**" (Greek, *engkaleō*, meaning "to demand" as in, "to call in a favor or what is due") "**against God's elect**" (Greek, *eklektos* meaning, "chosen-out ones")?

Now here is where those who don't believe in God's election have a problem. Paul is asking, "Who is going to make an accusation against those that God has chosen?" Election means that you believed the Gospel because God chose for you to believe, not because you chose to believe God's message. Now if you don't believe in election, then this verse doesn't make sense.

Paul, on the other hand, very much believes in election and teaches it throughout his letters. In fact, the first few chapters of this letter to the Roman Christians were spent explaining how justification comes by grace through faith, not as the result of anything that we have done. And, because God is the one who has declared us righteous (nowhere in the Bible does it teach that God ever removes that righteousness from our account) then it doesn't matter who brings a charge against us. God's response is that according to His record book, we are righteous; therefore, the charge will not stand because, "God has declared us to be righteous," that is, to say, "without sin."

So, we see that according to this verse, it doesn't matter how bad we sin, or how many sins we commit, our sins have already been paid for by Christ's blood, and in God's eyes we are without sin because we have been given the righteousness of Christ. We don't deserve this righteousness. What we do deserve is eternity in Hell. But we are righteous because God has chosen us and declared us to be righteous.

Paul now makes a somewhat startling declaration. He has just told us that no one can bring anything to the charge of God's chosen people because God has already justified them. Then, Paul asks another of his rhetorical questions, "**who is the one who condemns?**" And his answer is that Christ is the only one who can get away with condemning because he has paid for our righteousness with his blood. In fact, what Paul says regarding the only one who can get away with condemning is, "**Christ Jesus is He who died.**" That is Jesus, the Anointed One, the Christ, the Messiah, the Perfect One, has died to pay for the sins of the whole world.

Christ's death is significant for sure, but Paul adds, "**yes, rather who was raised.**" Christ's resurrection is of even greater significance than His death because it is His resurrection that demonstrates that He is the Anointed One, the Christ. He is not a dead Savior, He is alive!

Paul continues with his description of Jesus as the only one who can legally condemn by saying that Christ is now "**at the right hand of God,**" He has already assumed the position of power over all of creation and

is already seated in the position of judgment. Only He can judge; only He can condemn! In fact, John says in his gospel account:

For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, (John 5:22)

So, you see, we Christians cannot be charged with any offense because God has already declared us as righteous and Paul has shown that the only one who can condemn is Christ himself (who will not condemn those of us whom the Father has already declared as righteous). But there are some that Christ does condemn: those who refuse his offer of salvation.

Paul now makes one final statement regarding our living Savior who is at the right hand of God. He says that Christ is the one “**who also intercedes for us.**” Not only has the Father declared us righteous, but Christ is there at the heavenly court as our defense attorney making all of the legal arguments in our defense when the enemy accuses us.

However, that doesn’t mean we can sin all we want just because we’re already forgiven. If we are truly saved, then we don’t want to sin and, in fact, we want to keep His commandments.

But Paul doesn’t stop there. He goes on -

Romans 8:35-37

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or turmoil, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were counted as sheep for the slaughter.” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Paul has already made several declarations about those of us who are the chosen ones of God including:

- If God is for us, who can possibly be against us.
- He who gave His Son for our salvation will freely give us all things that we need for life and peace.
- No one can get away with charging us with any wrong, and if they do (that is, when Satan does) we have Christ as our defense attorney interceding for us.

Now he begins the final declaration of this chapter (although it will take several verses to finish the idea). He starts this verse off with, “**Who will separate us from the love of Christ?**”

The answer to this question doesn’t appear until verses thirty-eight and thirty-nine, but a number of candidates are offered by Paul in this verse. Though he never does directly answer this question, the ultimate answer is, “None of these things can separate us from the love of Christ.” He will go on to provide an even greater example of how strong Christ’s love for us is in a few verses.

Paul has just asked the rhetorical question, “**Who will separate us from the love of Christ?**” He then listed a number of afflictions that can occur to man. He then seems to abruptly change direction by quoting a passage from the Old Testament (**Psalms 44:22**). If you read through the 44th Psalm, however, you will see that this is neither abrupt nor a change of direction.

In Psalms 44 the writer is recounting first the way that God has fought for the Israelites and how their enemies have been scattered. In the second part of this Psalm, he recounts the shame suffered by the Israelites when God apparently abandoned them. The third portion of this Psalm is the author’s commitment to God in spite of the calamities that have overtaken the Israelites. At that point the writer of Psalms 44 proclaimed:

“**But for Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were counted as sheep for *the* slaughter.**”

The reason for the afflictions of the Jewish people was (and is) not because of sin; rather, it is because they are the chosen people of God.

That's the point that Paul is making here and the reason that he quoted this Old Testament passage. In the previous verse he recited a number of afflictions that befall Christians today. He is saying now that the reason for these afflictions is not because of disobedience or sin. In fact, quite the opposite, it is because we are obedient, and we are the children of God. That's the reason we are (and will be) attacked by our enemy.

Keep in mind what Christ told His disciples in John's gospel:

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (John 15:18-20)

And, as a way of reminding His followers as to why they are suffering, the writer of Psalms 44 says:

For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were counted as sheep for *the* slaughter.

The reason Paul says this is to point out the fact that when we are being persecuted, and we are suffering, it is because we are identified with Jesus Christ.

But— Paul follows that up with a contrasting point. He says that in all these things, in spite of all these types of suffering, **we overwhelmingly conquer!** Or – as some translations say, “**We more than conquer.**” For those of you who have read this verse in the King James Version, you may recall that it says, “**We are more than conquerers.**” That would imply that this is translated from a plural noun (conquerers). However, this expression is translated from a plural verb meaning that we don't simply win the skirmish, or barely defeat the enemy, we don't just eke out a victory at the last minute with super-human effort. This word means that we completely obliterate the enemy with overwhelming and irresistible force.

Even though we may be treated like slaughter-house sheep, and we are suffering for Him, and some of us are even dying for Him; “**we overwhelmingly conquer.**” It is not a description of our state of being (we are conquerors) It is a description of our action (we hyper-conquer through Him). Even though we may suffer, or even die for our faith, we are conquering!

And what is the source of the victory power that we have? It is “**Him who loved us.**” We are victorious through the One who foreknew us, who choose us, who sanctified us, who justified us, who adopted us as His own children, and who loves us with a self-sacrificing agape love! We are victorious through the One who suffered in our place, who shed His blood on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, who rose from the dead, and is alive forever more. We are victorious through the One with whom we are sealed, who is the guarantee of our salvation, who is our teacher, and who is our comforter in the midst of trials.

Yes, we are in a spiritual war. We did not choose this war, but we are in it nonetheless. Not only do we conquer our spiritual enemy when we endure our sufferings in the name of Christ, but ultimately, we will also conquer the final enemy, death. On the other side of our physical death, we will sing a victory song standing in the presence of the One who purchased that victory for us. Paul now says -

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Back in verse thirty-five Paul asked the question, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or turmoil, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” We learned at that time that Paul would answer the question later. Well, here it is. This is the final explosion in his volcanic eruption of the glorious benefits of being an adopted child of God; in fact, there is so much here that it is spread out over two verses.

Paul starts out his response here with “**For I am persuaded.**” And what is it that he is absolutely convinced is true? That nothing can separate us from the love of God! You will notice that this list starts out with life and death. We cannot be separated by life or by death. Then, the three words, **angels, rulers, and powers,** represent all of the angelic host, including faithful angels as well as fallen angels. It even includes Satan. Therefore, no angelic being can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus. The list includes things that exist, as well as things that have not yet come into being but will exist some day.

And we are told that neither height nor depth can separate us from the love of Christ. Paul uses these words as metonyms (where the name of one object is used to represent some related thing or things.) He uses these words to represent all the inhabitants of Heaven and Hell. He is saying that there is nothing in the heavens above or in Hell below or any other created thing that can separate us from God’s love.

Paul is talking about those of us who have been adopted as God’s children, that is, those who are born-again Christians. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. This is a very clear reference to the fact that we cannot get un-saved. We cannot even un-save ourselves according to this verse. If we are saved, we cannot “renounce” our salvation, because no created thing can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Some may try to argue against this and say, “But God loves all people; isn’t that what **John 3:16** says?” Unfortunately, the answer to that is “No.” As we will see in the next chapter, particularly in verse thirteen where it is said of God, “**As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’**”

So What?

Now, just because we have been declared righteous doesn’t mean we are free to sin all we want. The One who declared us righteous also tells us that if we love Him, we will obey Him. Also, notice what Jesus said in John’s gospel account. He had been having a discussion with the Pharisees, of whom He said, “**You are doing the deeds of your father.**” To which they responded, “... we have one Father: God.”

Jesus said to them, “**If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come of Myself, but He sent Me. (John 8:42)**

And later in the same Gospel account John quoted Jesus as saying,

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (John 14:15)

And we, also, should love Him out of gratitude because of what He has done for us. Thank-you God, for this gift that I so don’t deserve!

Have you suffered for your faith or your testimony? Are you suffering now because you are known as one of God’s chosen children (the world calls us “religious” people)? Remember that right now you are more than conquering and one day soon you will sing the victory song and receive the victor’s crown! Praise God for your suffering! He will receive the glory!

We are saved by God and by God alone, and once we have been declared righteous (saved) by God, it **cannot** be undone!

These verses highlight one of the greatest facts about our adoption by God. We don't have to worry about losing something we didn't earn, and we don't deserve. God did it entirely himself out of His love for us. He will never lose that love and there is nothing that can separate us from that love. Nothing! That means we are completely and eternally secure in our salvation! That's something to think about.

Remember what Paul told Titus:

... instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, (Titus 2:12-13)

Finally, keep in mind what Paul shared with the believers in Corinth regarding that blessed hope:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must put on the incorruptible, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible puts on the incorruptible, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the word that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:51-58)

The crux of this section of Scripture in the 8th chapter of Romans is the notion that nothing can separate us (Christians) from the love of God. There is no one and nothing that exists today or that will exist some day that can snatch us out of God's hand. This basically gets back to the age-old argument about who is ultimately responsible for our salvation. Am I saved because by an act of my own will, I chose to believe in the Gospel message? Or - am I saved because in eternity past, before God created anything, even before time began, He decided to grant me salvation, to adopt me as His son, and to proclaim me to be sinless?

But why is election so important. Why does it matter whether I chose to get saved or God chose me to be saved? It's important because what we believe about salvation dictates how we live our Christian lives. If we are saved because of an act of our own will, then it logically follows that we can get unsaved by an act of our own will. Or if I got saved because I did something, is there something that I have to do over and over again to prevent myself from losing that salvation. That sounds like "salvation by works" to me not "salvation by grace."

Keep in mind, if my salvation is by an act of God, who never changes, then my salvation is secure for all eternity.

Let's pray