

# God Is For Us

📖 Romans 8:31-39

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We're working with the Epistle to the Romans. Romans is a systematic theology of the doctrine of salvation. By systematic theology we mean the branch of theology that studies the various truths of Scripture and interrelates them in a harmony. The systematic presentation of salvation involves several elements; the doctrine of God because He is the standard and the one who saves, the doctrine of man and his constitution and nature, the doctrine of sin which separates us from God and so forth. The word salvation simply means "to rescue or deliver." Paul argues that all men are in need of being rescued because we are all under sin (Rom 3:9). He also argues that the gospel is the power of God by which He rescues us (Rom 1:16-17). The rescue is a work accomplished by God alone so that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Rom 5:15). Paul starts with our condemnation and separation from God due to our sin nature as well as our personal sin in Romans 1:18-3:20. This is our predicament. He then turns to the solution to our predicament by dividing the work of salvation into three tenses; past, present and future and he covers them in succession. Salvation in the past tense is from the penalty of sin which is taught in Rom 3:21-5:21. The penalty of sin is eternal separation from God due to our legal status before Him which is guilty. The removal of legal guilt is by way of justification which is God's declaration of righteousness made of us at the moment we believe. At that moment in time we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ so that God looks upon us and treats us as righteous in heaven even though in our experience on earth we still sin. Salvation in the present tense is from the power of sin which is temporal separation from God or loss of fellowship as taught in Rom 6:1-8:17. The deliverance is by way of sanctification or the gradual process of God setting the believer apart unto service to Him. This happens as we live by faith which results in the Holy Spirit producing an eternal quality of life through us which is His fruit. Salvation in the future tense is from the presence of sin which is the permanent removal of the sin nature so that we can dwell with God eternally as taught in Rom 8:18-30. This deliverance is by way of glorification which is the impartation of a resurrection body. It happens on the day of the rapture when all Church age believers will be raised.

Today we move on to Romans 8:31-39 which is Paul's grand consummation of the three tenses of salvation. Since the entirety of salvation in all three tenses is a work of God's grace on our behalf then what God has begun

in us He will complete. This translates into the doctrine of eternal security. What is meant by the doctrine of eternal security is that all who believe the gospel are saved by God and will be kept saved by God. There are many passages that teach eternal security; most popularly cited are John 5:24; 6:37-39; 10:27-28 and Eph 2:8-9. There are also many routes by which one may arrive at eternal security; the indwelling of the Spirit, the sealing of the Spirit, the ability to grieve the Spirit, the fact we are saved by God and not by faith and so forth and so on. So eternal security is evidenced many ways and yet it remains a hotly contested doctrine. Arminians reject eternal security holding that one may lose his salvation if he does not persevere until the end or commits some horrible sin. Calvinists confuse eternal security with assurance by holding that God ensures one's salvation by accomplishing continual perseverance until the end. Neither of these is what eternal security means. Eternal security simply means that all who believe the gospel are saved by God and will be kept saved by God until the end. Romans 8:31-39 is the most important passage teaching eternal security. Some who deny eternal security refuse to even interact with these verses<sup>1</sup> but this is a critical doctrine because it gives us a firm footing with God and therefore a healthy motive to live a godly life. It also brings comfort and enables us to relax and enjoy God our Savior. I would say it is one of the most practical doctrines in the Christian life.

To begin let's review Romans 8:28. Paul says that "we know" or "we have come to know" "that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God." The "all things" include the evil things that God does not cause but that He does cause to work together for a good end. Examples are rife in Scripture of believers who faced evil from men or demons and yet in the end God worked them together for a good end. Romans 8:28 is therefore one of the greatest promises of all Scripture. It assures us that while we do not know the future, we know who holds the future and that our circumstances are being manipulated by God to a good end. "Those who love God" are the same group that "are called according to His purpose" and are therefore all believers. Therefore, those who "are called" in this context are not simply those who hear the gospel invitation but also those who respond to the gospel invitation. Those who respond do so "according to His purpose." God's "purpose" is His before time plan that is not dependent upon time or upon man's decisions made in time but upon His eternal counsel found within Himself. His purpose is then expanded by words such as those whom He foreknew, He predestined, and those He predestined He called, and those He called He justified and those He justified He glorified. These works are all God's works that make up the parts of His purpose. They are to be viewed logically and not necessarily sequentially since in 8:30 all the works are viewed as already completed in eternity. In other words, just as the plan is complete in God Himself so the parts of the plan are complete in God Himself. They do not depend upon what happens in time though some of them do have a historic realization in time. The important point is that God does all these things, not man. In Romans 8:29 we said that "those whom He foreknew" is an expression of God's intimate, relational knowledge of believers before time. Foreknowledge is not mere intellectual knowledge. God has intellectual knowledge of all people, places, events and even the what-if's of history as a part of His omniscience. But foreknowledge is a subset of omniscience that deals specifically and only with His relational knowledge of believers before they even came into historical existence. A

before time relational knowledge of us is a type of knowledge that only God can have. He knew you and me relationally before time. Further, note in Romans 8:29 that it is the same ones whom He foreknew that He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. Predestination means to mark out a boundary before time. It refers to the making out of a boundary before time for those whom He relationally knew; that is, believers. It does not mean that certain ones were predestined to believe but that believers were predestined to be conformed to the image of God's own Son. This means that we will ultimately be in the likeness of Jesus Christ. The purpose set forth in 8:29 is "so that He [Jesus] would be the firstborn among many brethren." Jesus is the Son of God and we as His brethren are also sons of God. God has many sons. Jesus Christ is the pre-eminent Son; as such He cried out "Abba! Father!" and as such we cry out "Abba! Father!" He is the heir; as such He inherits all things. We are co-heirs and as such inherit all things in connection with Him (Rom 8:17). We keep noting that all these things are in connection with Him. We are foreknown in connection with Him, predestined in connection with Him, called in connection with Him and so forth and so on. All these things are linked with Him and center upon Him and are not to be viewed as abstract concepts. In Romans 8:30 the parts of the plan are welded together in an unbroken and unbreakable chain. All who are foreknown are predestined and all who are predestined are called and all who are called are justified and all who are justified are glorified. There is not one foreknown that is not glorified. Ryrie says, "The tense of this word shows that our future glorification is so certain that it can be said to be accomplished. Those who were foreknown will all be glorified without loss of a single one."<sup>2</sup> They are all aorist tenses and as such from God's vantage point they are already complete. We have already been glorified. This is why we say this teaches eternal security. If these things are already done from God's point of view then how could they be undone by anyone or anything? Eternal security is from outside of time, it is not dependent upon time. It is of God, not of man.

Since this is so Paul asks in Romans 8:31, **What then shall we say to these things?** The words **What then shall we say** are *τις οὐν ερωμεν* and are used by Paul in Romans 4:1; 6:1; 7:7 (also cf later Rom 9:14, 30) to introduce a logical conclusion. The expression **these things** may reach back to all the things in Romans 3:21-8:30 but more likely they refer exclusively to Romans 8:28-30. The logical conclusion of God's foreknowing us, predestining us, calling us, justifying us and glorifying us is that **God is for us** and if this is so then **who is against us?** The **if** is not conditional. It is a 1<sup>st</sup> class, assumed reality, and should be translated "since." God is for us and this means that our eternal security depends entirely upon Him. Since this is true, who can really be against us? Anyone or anything that might be opposed to us is of no substance relative to Him. He is the Creator and everyone else and everything else is merely the creation. A.T. Robertson says bluntly, "There is no one on a par with God." This is a powerful truth. I classify it as an all-sufficient truth. By all-sufficient truth I mean that it is so great that it encompasses or includes all the other truths that combine to form it. So that if I know the all-sufficient truth that God is for me then I tacitly know all the truths that combine to form that truth. In other words, if I know that in the end God is for me then I also know that in all the means required to reach that end God is also for me. Now with this concept you are impregnable. There is nothing that you can face that God is not for you in the

situation. You may not be able to handle the situation. 2 Cor 1:8-11 teaches that here are situations that are beyond your ability to handle. But it also teaches that there is no situation that is beyond His ability to handle and since He is for you you can rest in Him and He will get you through. He is the Creator and as such, "Nobody or nothing can stand in His way."<sup>3</sup> So verse 31 is practical truth for everyday living and another reason all things work together for good...

Romans 8:32 begins to expound just how reasonable it is to conclude that God is for us. Paul's argument is from the greater to the lesser. In other words, if God has given us the greater thing, Jesus Christ, will He not also give us all things lesser? Note first the greater thing He has given us. **He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?** The greater thing is **His own Son** who is of infinite value, the lesser things are **all things**. There is a negative and a positive here; the negative is did not spare; the positive is He delivered Him over. The two are two sides of the same coin and relate to the crucifixion. But before we look at the crucifixion we want to observe the expression **His own Son**. The Greek word translated **own** is *ιδιου*, an adjective signifying possession. Wuest says, "His own" is *idios* ( *διος* ), "one's own peculiar, private possession." Our Lord is the Father's very own, private possession, infinitely dear to Him."<sup>4</sup> To understand the immensity of what was given us in the crucifixion we have to understand the love beyond the Father and the Son. The Father loved the Son with an infinite love from all eternity. Therefore, if God gave us His dearest possession how much more will He give us less dear possessions? It's the argument from the greater to the lesser. If I would give you a house, how much more would I give you a kitchen, a bedroom, a bathroom, et. al. Now we come to the negative side of the crucifixion. **He**, the Father **did not spare His own Son**. The Greek word for **spare** is *εφεισατο*. "**Spared not** ( *ο κ φεισατο [ouk ephesato]* ). First aorist middle of *φειδομαι [pheidomai]*, old verb used about the offering of Isaac in Gen. 22:16."<sup>5</sup> And also of wolves not sparing the flock in Acts 20:29. It means to not hold back a dear possession. Jesus Christ is the Father's most beloved possession and He did not spare Him but gave Him to us. Having received Him we receive all that comes with Him. The positive side of the crucifixion is the verb **He...delivered Him**. The word means to release something of strong personal interest. The Father's strong personal interest was in the Son and He released Him for us in the crucifixion. Murray says, "It is only as the ordeal of Gethsemane and Calvary is viewed in the perspective of damnation vicariously borne, damnation executed with the sanctions of unrelenting justice, and damnation endured when the hosts of darkness were released to wreak the utmost of their vengeance that we shall be able to apprehend the wonder and taste the sweetness of love that passes knowledge, love eternally to be explored but eternally inexhaustible. If He divested Himself of His greatest interest how much more will He give us all things?"

Now, as a brief aside, some use this verse to support the belief in limited atonement.<sup>6</sup> In other words, if you notice, in the context the Son was given over for **us**, which is believers only. So the argument is that the Father only gave the Son for the elect and not for all men.<sup>7</sup> I agree that there are verses which speak of God the Father giving the Son for believers. This is one of those verses. Another one is in John 10:11, 15 where Jesus said, "I am

the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." It is obviously true that Christ died for believers. However, this does not imply that Christ did not die for all men in some sense. Other passages seem to teach that He died for all men. For example, Hebrews 2:9, "Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." And 1 John 2:2, "He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but for the sin of the whole world." The resolution seems to be found in the difference between *provision* and *application*. God the Father intended in Christ that His substitutionary death be *provided* for all men but *applied* only to those who believe. How one comes to believe is an involved matter not discussed here by the apostle Paul, nor is it his point. His point in the context is to assure believers that God is for them. He's not retracting to address that Christ died for unbelievers in a provisional way. That would be foreign to insert in the argument. The argument is that for those who have had Christ's death applied to them we can also expect God and Christ to give us **all things**. The **all things** are not defined but we may suppose that they are **all things** necessary for life and godliness. It logically follows that if we have been given Christ then all things that come with Christ that are necessary to live the Christian life are also given to us.

The **all things** are said to be **freely given**. The word translated **freely give** is *χαρίζομαι* from *χαρις*, the root word for "grace." All gifts are free grace gifts meaning they are bestowed upon us freely and not on the basis of merit. Grace is the opposite of merit. We do nothing to receive these gifts. They come automatically with Christ. It is like receiving a house and with the house all the furnishings of the house. Since we have been given Christ then we have also been given all that comes with Christ. This proves that God is for us.

In Romans 8:33 Paul asks another question; **Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** The word **charge** is a legal term used in a court of law (cf Acts 19:38, 40; 23:28, 29; 26:2, 7). The court of law in view is God's court in heaven. Paul is asking, "Who can bring a charge against us in God's court in heaven?" Rev 12:10 says that Satan brings accusations against believers continually in heaven. Primarily he accuses us of personal sin. However, when such accusations are made the Son intercedes for us as our attorney, the very truth at the end of verse 34. The point is that if Satan who presently has access to heaven makes accusations against us they are of no substance because God has delivered up Christ for us and He has paid the penalty in full. Therefore all his accusations are dismissed since a penalty executed cannot be executed again.

Note that the body of individuals in view against whom no one can bring a substantial charge are **God's elect**. The Greek word **elect** is the adjective *εκλεκτων*. It has three meanings. First, it can mean "to select, to choose" either individually or corporately as a group. Second, it can also mean "to be distinguished" as of the Messiah and David. Third, it can mean "to be considered the best in a course of selection, choice, excellent" as of an outstanding Christian (Rom 16:13). Moulton and Milligan point out its use in classical Greek for something "choice" or "beautiful," such as choice silver or a "beautiful lodging." In this sense it means "of a better quality than the rest." How should it be understood here? Since the group in view are already believers it is best to take the third usage here. Paul is saying, "Who will bring a charge against God's choice ones." The reason we are

choice is not because there was anything in ourselves that made us better than others. The reason we are choice is because God has justified us and we are in Christ, clothed in His righteousness and nothing of our own. The latter part of this verse shows that God has justified ones in view. So we are not choice because of anything in ourselves but because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us such that when God looks at us He sees us clothed in Christ's righteousness and therefore "choice" or "excellent." The valuation in the context is based on legal position. He considers all believers as "choice" because we all have Christ's righteousness imputed to our account.

The legal setting continues at the beginning of 8:34 where Paul asks, **who is the one who condemns?** Since God is the one who has legally declared us to be righteous in heaven then **who is the one who condemns us?** Now we already discarded Satan as one who could validly make a charge against us. He makes the charges but they are all invalidated. Therefore the only one who remains as one who can make a condemnation is **Christ Jesus**. He is the one to whom all judgment has been given. John 5:22, "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son..." and Acts 17:31, "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Christ is the only judge and therefore the only One who can condemn. Will Christ condemn us? He will not condemn us because of four things. First, in verse 34, He will not condemn us because **He died** for us. At Golgotha He paid the penalty for our sin so that He was condemned in our place. When we believed in Him our guilt was removed. Second, He will not condemn us because He **was raised**. On the third day He was resurrected as physical evidence that He had done no sin and hence His payment for our sin was accepted by God. This proved our justification (Rom 4:25) and hence no condemnation. Third, He will not condemn us because He ascended to **the right hand of God**. In the ascension He passed through the heavenly places to the highest seat of authority in heaven. Therefore there is no one above Him to condemn us. Fourth, He will not condemn us because He **intercedes for us**. Satan makes charges but Jesus serves as our attorney in heaven to answer those charges with the argument "I paid for that!" And since a sin cannot be paid for twice but only once for all then we cannot be condemned. Therefore, for these four reasons Christ does not condemn us and there is no one left to condemn us. This means God is for us.

In conclusion, in verse 31 we are taken to the logical conclusion of verses 28-30. "What then shall we say to the fact that God's purpose for us included His foreknowing us, predestining us, calling us, justifying us and even glorifying us? There is but one thing to say: God is for us and who can be against us. The Creator of the universe is for you and there is no one on par with Him. Look at what He has done for you in verse 32. He did not spare His most precious possession, His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all. If He gave you this greater thing how much more will He freely of His grace give you all things? In verse 33, who in God's court will bring a valid charge against you, His precious, choice one? God is the one who declares you righteous in His court of law. In verse 34, who then is the one who condemns? The one to whom all judgment has been given is Christ Jesus and He will not condemn you because of four things; He has died for you and your guilt is removed, He has been raised and

you are declared righteous, He has ascended to the right hand of God as the highest authority and He intercedes for you dismissing all possible charges.

What's the resounding truth in all this? God is for you. What's the application of the truth that God is for you? Eternal security to an infinite degree. God is for you and anything or anyone that is opposed to you is nothing compared to Him. That is why the final verses explore the anyone and anything in all of creation and pronounce us to be more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit knew that people would come along and say, "Yeah, but what about..." And cut off all these lies through Paul who says, "There is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ," not even ourselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Anderson, *Eternal Security: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal*.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 1803.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Constable, *Expository Notes on the Bible*, Rom 8:31.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Ro 8:31.

<sup>5</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ro 8:32.

<sup>6</sup> Limited atonement is also known as particular redemption and definite atonement. See John Murray's argument for limited atonement in his commentary, *NICNT, Epistle to the Romans*, p 325.

<sup>7</sup> Cf Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 394.