

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?

A sermon preached by Henry Dixon
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*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?
It is God who justifies. (Romans 8.33)*

Introduction

We have been considering together the questions that Paul asks towards the end of Romans chapter 8. These questions are what we call “rhetorical questions”. They are questions whose answer is obvious, and which are designed to get the reader thinking. Paul asks these questions in order to help his readers to see that they are completely safe. There is no way that God will fail to bring them to glory at the resurrection.

Last time we were considering the second of these questions, from verse 32, where the apostle asked “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?” to which the answer is, “Of course he will not possibly fail to give us all things.” God has already given us the biggest gift he could possibly give – his own Son. He did not spare him from the suffering that would be involved in saving us, but gave him up, he handed him over to the power of sin and death, for us. He did this for all those who are true believers. Therefore, if God has given his Son for us, the apostle argues, how can he possibly fail to give us all the blessings which he has promised at the resurrection? These blessings include glorious new bodies, the absence of suffering, joint ownership of the whole recreated world, living in perfect fellowship with all God’s people, complete freedom from sin, and, best of all, seeing God, and knowing him perfectly. The answer is that, having given us the greatest gift of all, his own Son, God cannot fail to give us all things in Christ.

Today, I want us to think about the third of these questions, which is found in verse 33. “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?” The implied answer to that question is “No-one”. No-one

can possibly bring a charge that will stand against those whom God has chosen. Paul gives the reason, "It is God who justifies." God himself, the highest authority, has said that we who believe are righteous in his sight. If **God** says we are righteous in his sight, then no-one has any power to say otherwise.

This question deals with a very important matter. Many true believers are concerned that, even though they have asked Christ to save them, they may have committed some sin which is so bad that they will be found to be unfit for heaven on the final day. Or, they worry that they may at some point in the future do something which would disqualify them for heaven. Many also, even though, at one level, they believe the doctrine of justification by faith, still also often, in practice, try to earn favour with God through their service of him. But this verse affirms that the true believer is completely secure. There is no charge of any description that can stand against the person who has looked to Christ to be his Saviour.

So, if you are a Christian already, I hope that, as we think about this verse, you will be helped and encouraged. If you are not yet a Christian, I hope that you will see from this verse how God has provided his righteousness for all who will receive it, and will come to him and receive from him that righteousness.

Let us now look at this verse in a bit more detail. First of all, I want us to consider sources of accusation that we face. Then I want to consider why, even though we do face these accusations, no charge that might be brought against us can stand.

1. Sources of accusation that we face

Let us first of all consider the sources of accusation that we face. There are three main sources of accusation that we face: accusation from our own consciences, accusation from the world, and accusation from the devil.

1) Accusation from our own consciences

Our own consciences often accuse us. The problem is that we have sinned. We are all guilty before God of the most terrible sins. Most of us, before we are converted, suppress our consciences, and try to ignore the guilt that we feel. But, when we are converted, our consciences, which had lain dormant when we were unbelievers, are

awakened. We become painfully aware of the sins that we committed when we were unbelievers. Our sins from the past may well haunt us. But worse, we continue to sin as believers. We realise that our sins as believers are in some ways worse than the sins we used to commit as unbelievers. The sins we committed as unbelievers we committed in ignorance. But our sins as believers are sins against the light. We sin in spite of the vast love that God has shown us, knowing full well that what we are doing is wrong.

Sometimes the pang of conscience that a Christian can experience can be excruciatingly painful – more painful than can possibly be described. We can feel utterly unworthy of the love of God, and wonder how we can possibly hope to be allowed into heaven.

2) The accusations of the world

We live in a hostile world, populated with many people who are totally opposed to God, and also opposed to his people. Many are constantly on the look out for when a Christian fails, and, when a Christian does fail, they will repeat it endlessly. If someone who happens to be a professing Christian should fall into some gross sin which involves a criminal offence, the newspapers will mercilessly repeat the matter, with headlines like, “Churchgoer found shop lifting” and “Vicar runs off with the organist”.

Probably many of us experience this sort of thing at work, or with non-Christian members of our families. If you should happen to let slip some swear word, or if you should happen to lose your temper, it will be repeated again and again, often with exaggeration. “And he calls himself a Christian” they mutter to themselves as they repeat the offence to each other.

The accusation of the world can easily get us down and make us feel that we are useless Christians, or perhaps not Christians at all.

3) The devil

The greatest accuser of all is Satan. He is called, in the book of Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10, “the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night.” Satan accuses us to God, and seeks to provoke God to condemn us. There is an example of this in the book of Job. In chapter 1 of that book we read that the angels presented themselves before God. We read in verse 8 that God

said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no-one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." Satan answered with the accusation,

Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.

Satan effectively said to God that Job was only serving God because of what he got out of him. He claimed that if God were to withdraw his blessings, then Job would stop serving God.

Satan also accuses us to ourselves. He whispers in our ear, "What sort of a Christian do you think you are? How can you even call yourself a Christian when you sin in the way you do? How can you imagine that God would let you into heaven when you have sinned so badly?"

Why does Satan accuse us? Is it because he loves God's law and wants to see it upheld? Of course not! He hates God's law. He accuses us because he hates God, and hates us, and hates the thought of us being saved and going to heaven. So he is looking for any possible grounds that he can find to disqualify us for heaven. He is seeking some way to accuse us before God, so that God will have to say that we cannot come into heaven after all. And if he cannot find a basis to disqualify us for heaven, he will do his utmost to discourage us and rob us of our joy, and make us believe that we will not be able to enter heaven.

So we see that there are powerful forces which would seek to accuse us: our own consciences, the world, and the devil. But the challenge nevertheless is issued by the apostle Paul, "who can bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?" The clearly implied answer to that question is "No-one". No-one can bring a charge against the true believer that will stand. On what basis can he say that no charge against us can stick? We now turn to this question.

2. Why no charge can "stick" against the true believer

Paul clearly intends us to understand from his question that no charge against the true believer can be brought and made to stand. On what basis does he say this?

1) Not because we are good, or because God does not mind about sin

The first thing to note is what is NOT the reason that no charge against us can stand. He does not say, "No charge against us can stand because we are good people". He does not say, "No charge against us can stand because, though we used to be sinners, now we obey God". He does not say, "No charge against us can stand because God does not really mind about sin". Nor does he say, "No charge can stand against us because the things God used to say are sinful are no longer sinful". Why does he not say these things? For the simple reason that they are not true. We are **not** good people. We are sinners. Even after we are born again, we still have a sinful tendency that lives on in us, a tendency which is called "the flesh". No Christian, however, mature in the faith, has reached the point where he does not sin any more. Nor is it true to say that God does not mind about sin, or that sins that the Bible says are bad are not bad any more. God does mind very much about sin. He is the holy God. He is a consuming fire. Just one sin, whether in thought or word or deed, is enough to put us into hell. Nor is it true to say that God's standards have changed. What was wrong 2,000 years ago is still wrong today.

We can learn a lesson from this. The answer to accusation is NEVER to say to those who accuse something like, "Well I am not really as bad as you say that I am. I am good at heart really." If you try to answer along those lines you have already lost the argument, because you are arguing on the basis of falsehood. Nor should we EVER try to answer accusation by saying, "God does not really mind about sin". That is false. To go down that path leads to spiritual disaster, and will lead you into a sinful life.

2) Because we are justified by God

So what is the basis upon which the apostle says that no charge can be brought against the Christian? The answer is that it has nothing whatsoever to do with our behaviour, or obedience, or service of God. It is nothing to do with any supposed changes to God's moral law. It is entirely down to what God has done. The apostle says, "It is God who justifies." The reason why no accusation can stand against the true believer is because God has said about that person that he is righteous in his God's sight. God has declared that person to be "not guilty". If God has said about a person that he is not guilty, then any complaint that anyone else might make against him will carry no weight

whatsoever. The Almighty God has said that this individual is righteous in his sight, and nothing can change that declaration by God.

This is the logical consequence of the great doctrine of justification by faith alone which the apostle teaches in this letter. Some of you were here a few months ago when this truth was explained, but it will not do you any harm for me to remind you of this. Others of you were not here, so it will be good for you to hear this. The doctrine of justification by faith alone says that basis upon which we are made acceptable to God is not the good works that we have done; it is not our attempts to be religious; it is not because we have been baptised; it is not even because of our service as Christians in terms of evangelism, prayer, Bible reading and attending services of a church. The only basis for our being counted as righteous in God's sight that God has given to us a righteousness that is not our own, as long as we receive this by faith. He has attributed to us the righteousness of Christ. Jesus lived a perfect life. He obeyed all of God's law, without ever sinning once. Then he died on the Cross. When he died on the Cross, God did two things. He put the sins of all those who would believe in Jesus onto Jesus, and punished Jesus for those sins. At the same time, he put Jesus's righteousness onto those who would believe in him. All true believers are therefore credited with a righteousness that is not their own. Jesus's righteousness becomes their righteousness.

This is summed up in a verse in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5 and verse 21, where the apostle says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." A wonderful exchange took place. Our sin was placed on Jesus. He, Jesus, who had no sin, became sin for us. God punished him for our sins. This was so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. The result of what happened is that Jesus's righteousness has become our righteousness. Jesus became our sin, and we became his righteousness.

Another verse which speaks about this is in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians chapter 1 and verses 30 and 31, where he says, "It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'" The righteousness of the believer is the righteousness of Jesus. If you have trusted in Christ to be your Saviour, his righteousness has become your righteousness. He is your "entry pass" into heaven. It is nothing that you have done. It is not your works, or your efforts, or the fact that you have been baptised, if you have been baptised. It is what

he did on your behalf. It is on the basis of the perfect obedience of Christ, which has been credited to you.

Bible teachers sometimes speak of the obedience of Jesus under two main headings. There is what they call Jesus's "active obedience". This is perfect obedience to the law of God. Then there is what they call Jesus's "passive obedience". This is his obedience to the Father by dying on the Cross for our sins. It is these two things, Jesus's active obedience and his passive obedience that have made you acceptable to God, if you are trusting in Christ.

Think of it this way: imagine you are a very poor person who is living on the street. You have not had a bath for months. Your clothes stink and are torn. They are not much more than rags. Imagine that Prince Harry was to announce his engagement, and for some extraordinary reason, you are invited to the royal wedding and the reception afterwards. What are you going to do? You know that you cannot turn up at Buckingham Palace in your filthy state. You need to be clean, and you need to be wearing suitable wedding clothes. There is no way that you will be allowed in, dressed as you are. But you have no money to buy a new set of clothes. You do not even have access to bathing facilities. You do not know how you will be able to attend the wedding, much as you would like to. But imagine that a second letter is delivered to you which says, "We understand that you have fallen on hard times. If you come to the side entrance at Buckingham Palace on the morning of the wedding, and show the officer at the door this letter, you will be taken to a bathroom where you can have a bath, and then a butler will give you a new set of clothes to wear for the wedding."

This is what God has done for us. He has invited us to the wedding banquet of his Son. But not only has invited us to the wedding, he has also provided for us cleansing from our sins and a new set of clothes to wear, a white robe of the righteousness of Christ.

Now, just imagine you were to say, when you receive this message, "I don't want your charity. I will sort my own clothing out, thank you very much." Imagine that, having said this, you made your own feeble attempt to clean yourself up, and to sew together the rags you are wearing. Would you then gain admittance to the reception? No. You would be removed, as being unfit to be in the presence of the Queen. Yet this is what so many people do with God. They try to get into heaven on the basis of their own righteousness. They think that if they do things like pray regularly, go on pilgrimages, fast, give money to the poor and try to live a decent life, that, somehow, they will get to a good

enough standard to enter heaven. But God says “all our righteous acts are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64.6). All our attempts to be good are utterly unacceptable to God.

But where our own righteousness fails us, God has provided, if we will accept it from him by faith, a righteousness that is not our own. Paul speaks about this in chapter 3 of this letter. He says, in verses 21 and 22 of that chapter, “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” God has provided his righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, as a free gift to all who believe. Those who receive this righteousness are justified by God. They are declared by God to be righteous. If God has said about them that they are righteous, then nobody in heaven or on earth can say anything different about them.

This is THE great answer to accusation. If you have trusted in Christ, the reason why you can stand against the accusation of Satan is nothing to do with your obedience. It is all to do with the obedience of Christ. When Satan tries to bring you low because of your sin, you can answer him, “You have not told half the story. I am much worse than what you said. But the righteousness I have is not my own. It is the righteousness of Christ. His righteousness is perfect. You cannot fault it.” When you answer in this way, the devil has to flee. He has no answer.

This is summed up in a verse in the hymn “Before the throne of God above.” One verse in that hymn says,

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see him there
Who made and end of all my sin.

Another hymn, “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds” puts it like this in one of its verses,

By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,
Although with sin defiled;
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am owned a child.”

3) Because we have been chosen by God

Notice something else that the apostle says here. He says, “Who will bring any charge against those whom God **has chosen?**” Those who have been saved were chosen by God before the creation of the world. This is something which the apostle said in a different way a few verses earlier, in verse 29 and 30, where he said, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

As we saw when we considered these verses a few weeks ago, by saying that God “foreknew” his people, the apostle is not saying that God knew who would choose him of their own free will. He is saying that there are those whom God knew – those whom he loved – before they were ever born. These are the ones whom God, in his great love and mercy, chose to save. He set his affection upon them. These same ones are the ones whom God predestined to be like his Son. All those whom God has chosen, will, he has also determined, be like Jesus on the final day. Those whom he predestined, he also called. God made sure, at the right time, that they heard the Gospel, and at the same time worked in their hearts to move them to believe. Those whom God called, he also justified. He declared them to be righteous. Those whom God justified he also glorified. He has already given them his glory.

This gives us a further reason why no charge can stand against those who are truly the Lord’s. Those who have been justified were first chosen by him before the creation of the world. They are the sheep whom the Father gave to his Son as a gift. The Son laid down his life specifically for each of his sheep. “God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all”, for all of the sheep who were chosen by the Father before the creation of the world. If these things are the case, how can anyone bring a charge against any person who is truly the Lord’s? The person who is saved was chosen by God before the creation of the world. God cannot possibly condemn one of his chosen people. The same ones who were chosen were also justified. And those who are justified have also been glorified.

Conclusion

If you are a Christian, let this sink in: you are justified by God! God will not allow any accusation against you to stand. You must not allow yourself to fall prey to accusation.

Do not slip back into a “salvation by works” mentality. Do not try to justify yourself before God or man through your service of God and good works. We **should** do good works, but we should do these not because we hope thereby to gain favour with God, but because we are grateful to God for the fact that he **has** justified us. If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour, realise that Christ is your righteousness. God has justified you. You do not need to justify yourself. Realise that the justification of God is permanent. Believe that you are for ever justified, and God will not entertain any accusation against you.

If you are not a Christian, stop trying to establish your own righteousness. See that your own righteousness is as filthy rags in God’s sight. Ask God to save you. Receive the righteousness that God has provided on the basis of the obedience of Christ.

This booklet contains the edited notes of a sermon which was preached by Henry Dixon. A recording of the actual sermon that was preached may be found at

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=10817731592>

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