

Romans 8 (32) – Stop Listening to the Devil

There is a preacher whose voice is amplified throughout the whole world. People are being shaped by his message in ways they don't even realize. And this includes many people who call themselves Christians. He is always preaching his message across many platforms, and he has captured many hearts. His voice most often goes unchallenged, his influence is unrivaled, and people all over the world lie under the power of his spell (cf. 1 John 5:19). But he doesn't preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His goal is to get you to distrust, disbelieve, or disobey God. Yes, indeed, Satan is the loudest, most active, most heard, and most listened to preacher on earth.

Satan is a preacher who is tirelessly and tenaciously spreading his message, and the ironic thing is that his voice doesn't even register as a whisper. It is like an invisible voice of evil, but you hear it all the time. His voice takes on many different sounds, and you hear it in many different places and in many different ways. His minions and his victims help to spread his message, and many people receive it as good news. In essence he controls the world system, and he is so effective that Jesus called him the ruler of this world (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). The Apostle Paul said his influence over others makes him the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). Paul also calls him the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), referring to his dominion over the realm of evil, and his influence over the cultural mindset. The Devil is the most popular preacher in the world.

Satan speaks through the news, the celebrities, magazines, books, TV, radio, and the Internet. His message is coming through in the classroom, the family room, and the courthouse. You hear the message in your favorite songs, shows, movies, and social media. You can sometimes hear his influence through family, or friends, or Christian preachers and teachers. Not everything everyone says is directly influenced by the Devil, but so much of our cultural mindset and personal process is guided by things that are not in line with God's word, God's wisdom, or God's will. The question for you today is how to stop Satan from influencing your life.

The ongoing issue is that we tend to just take it all in without actively challenging the message. But you can't just avoid it; you are surrounded by it. Of course, you shouldn't steep yourself in it, but isolation will not work. Instead, you need to insulate yourself, to be in the world but not of it. That means you'll have to actively and personally challenge the message.

And that just isn't happening. You can see that most people aren't challenging the Devil's message because you see the results of it everywhere, even in the Church. People are constantly and consistently distrusting, disbelieving, or disobeying God. They are deluded, discontented, or disconnected. They readily question or twist God's word and attack your godly position and witness. They try and justify their sinful actions or attitudes. They remain stuck in discouragement when life doesn't go the way they want. They can't seem to overcome their feelings of guilt, or hopelessness, or fear. People suffer from a stifling sense of inadequacy as they compare their situation to others. People are more passionate about possessions and positions than they are about God. They're slaves to their leisure, they consistently yield to their lusts, and they redefine sin and call you unloving if you call them on it. People are all too happy in their sin, or despairing because they don't get away with it. The Devil knows how to bring the deception, distraction, and destruction, and people are eating it up like a spoon-fed baby. It's time for Christians to grow up.

The problem in many people's lives, whether they are happy or not, is that they are listening to the wrong voices. That's what gets you down. That's what keeps you tangled up. Or that's what keeps you happily deceived. That's your problem. Everyone needs to confront the sermons of Satan with the truth of God and the gospel of Christ. Because you've got to see your situations through the lens of Jesus, instead of seeing Jesus through the lens of your situations, good or bad.

Hearing good preaching is vital to you. As a pastor, I want to preach truth that will liberate you from the lies, that will give you hope, that will reinforce a biblical, godly lifestyle and Christian worldview. I want to encourage and

equip you to be a witness of Jesus to this world. And inspire you to live out loud in a world drowning in the message of evil voices.

However, my preaching to you is only part of the equation. One hour a week, or even two or three hours a week, is not enough compared to the constant onslaught that you are exposed to with that other message, the opposite messages. So, what that means is that you must not only hear good preaching, not only listen to good sermons and read good articles and good books, and not only fellowship with likeminded believers. To truly renew your mind, and keep your mind focused, you have to preach to yourself.

I'm not talking about just repeating simple catchphrases to develop a positive mental attitude. I'm also not talking about claiming promises that aren't actually there for you. I'm talking about preaching the gospel and its implications for your life to yourself. You have to take action.

Listening to the world, the flesh, and the Devil is passive. It's all around you. You've got to marinate your mind on everything that God has done, is doing, and will do, to save you, starting from eternity past, to the life, death, and return of Jesus, and the eternal kingdom. Do you really have a clear grasp on the gospel? Are you amazed at the grace of God in light of your sin? Do you meditate on the truth? Do you preach it to yourself daily?

And a good place to start preaching to yourself is Romans 8:32. *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* The message of the Bible and the promises of God are wrapped up in that one verse. So, let's study it, so you can preach it to yourself, and overcome the message of the enemy of your soul.

In Romans 8:32, the Apostle Paul is arguing from the greater to the lesser. In other words, if you can do the harder thing, then you can certainly do the easier thing. If you can dunk on a ten-foot basket, then you can surely dunk on an eight-foot basket. If you can throw a ball 200 feet, then you can throw a ball 100 feet. If you can afford \$1000, then you can afford \$100. This is the

logic Paul is using to get you understand the steadfastness of God's character, the certainty of God's promises, and the power of God's love.

When Paul says, *God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all*, that is the harder thing. And when he says, *how will he not also with him graciously give us all things*, that is the easier thing. If he did the harder thing, he can and will most certainly do the easier thing. Because he did the harder thing in order to do the easier thing.

Think about all the wonderful promises you see in Romans 8:28-29. What stands between you and all of these wonderful promises? One thing is your sin, and the wrath of God against your sin. God's wrath against your sin is justified, and with no way to pay the penalty, you have no hope of everlasting joy. How can you pay for it? What do you have that is of enough value to God? There is no way you can do it. But there is way for it to be done. God sent his son Jesus to live a sinless life in your place, and to die an atoning death in your place, so that his wrath would be satisfied and you could live in eternal glory with God. So, God made a way to overcome that big thing that stood between you and all those wonderful promises. Amen.

But wait a minute. God's wrath against your sin wasn't the biggest thing standing between you and all those wonderful promises. There was something harder than that. And you see it in the first half of Romans 8:32.

The biggest thing standing between you and all those wonderful promises is the infinite, perfect love between God the Father and God the Son. Look again at the first half of Romans 8:32: "*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all...*" God loved his son, but he did not spare him. That was the harder thing to do. The sacrifice of his own son. This is the weight of John 3:16 – *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*. Twice while Jesus was on earth God's voice came from heaven and said, "This is my *beloved* Son". The NT again and again calls Jesus the beloved.

The point of Romans 8:32 is that this love of God for his one and only Son was unlike any other love in the universe. God didn't need anything other than the love, joy, honor and beauty that he already had within the triunity of himself. And so, this was the hardest thing for God to do. Would the Father sacrifice his own Son, his beloved, and give him up to be abused and betrayed and beaten and denied, flogged, spit on, mocked, and nailed to a cross? Would he allow the Prince of Peace to be treated with such cruel and unjust violence? And most of all, would the Father himself punish Jesus as if he committed all of that sin, the world's sin, your sin?

If God was willing to do that, then you could know without a doubt that whatever the purpose he was pursuing was guaranteed. And Romans 8:32 tells you that God did give up his Son. God *did not* spare him. Instead, as Acts 4:27-28 says, "*for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*" And Jesus, the Son of God willingly put himself in the hands of his Father, who allowed all of this to happen (Matthew 26:39 / John 10:17). The greatest act of submission, the greatest act of love, the hardest decision ever made. And God made that decision for you.

God *did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all*; now what does this guarantee? Paul says "*how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*" Since God gave up his own Son for you, he will most certainly give you all things in him. Since God's done the greater thing, he will surely do the lesser thing he was aiming for.

Now the question is what does Paul mean by the phrase *all things*? You know it doesn't mean that your life will be all comfort and no problems. The troubles of vs.35-39 show you that. When Paul says *all things*, he means all the wonderful promises you see in vs.28-39. It isn't a about an easy life, it is about eternal life. He defines it in vs.28-30. God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28). But the Lord does not define what is good by what is comfortable, pleasurable, and

enjoyable. It is good if it conforms you to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). God will give you everything you need to move from predestined to called to justified to glorified (Romans 8:30). His plan for you will not fail! No matter whatever else happens to you, God's plan and purpose will happen for you. It's guaranteed!

Since *God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all*, therefore:

- All things will work together for your good (vs.28)
- You will be conformed to the image of God's Son (vs.29)
- You will be glorified (vs.30)
- No opposition will ultimately be successful against you (vs.31)
- No charge will work against you (vs.33)
- Jesus is praying for you (vs.34)
- In all the troubles of life, you will be more than a conqueror (vs.35-37)
- You can be supremely sure that there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (vs.35, 38-39)

What that means is that since the Father did not spare his Son all the promises of God are absolutely certain for those who trust him. The fact that the Father's *did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all* guarantees every promise God has made to you in Christ. Hallelujah!

You can hang your hope on Romans 8:32, and preach this truth to yourself, and preach to yourself all of those wonderful promises surrounding it. If things just don't seem to be working out. If you can't seem to do things right. If you ever worry about people coming against you, gossiping, slandering, and abusing you, keep preaching Romans 8:32 to yourself and keep remembering these promises. If you're going through trials, troubles, and tribulation. If you're facing anger, fear, and guilt. If it seems like the whole world is trying to convince you that God doesn't love you, that God isn't worth trusting, that God can't help you. Fight that false message with the gospel truth of Romans 8:32! You need to be active, and let God be the loudest and most influential preacher in your life. It's time to stop listening to the Devil, and start preaching Jesus to yourself! Amen!