

# God Is For Us

March 29, 2020

Romans 8:31-39

Good morning, Church! I've been greatly encouraged to hear the feedback we have received after last week's service. I am blown away at the reach of our service, connecting with missionaries and friends of this church in other countries, on other continents! Wow? Who would have thought. It takes me back to our days in seminary in the late 80's. Those were the days of the televangelist scandals. So, whenever people asked me what type of ministry I was heading for, I always told them "televangelism! That's where all the money is!" And now, I'm living the dream, a television preacher! Who would have thought!

This morning, I take on another certain truth for these uncertain times: God is for us. Last time it was God is with us. Today, it is the truth that God is for us. By this I mean, His heart toward His people has not changed one bit, in spite of what it might seem given the circumstances.

So often, when facing hardship, we ask ourselves, "What did I do to deserve this!" Or worse, "I've done my part, why is God not doing His?" As we saw so often in the book of Job, our perspective is skewed toward cause and affect. But this is not God. God is the God of His promises, and His promises never change.

Now, I want to be clear from the outset that there is judgment. God is in authority (that's next week's message) and has the right to judge as He sees fit. He has, He is, and He will judge His creation. I want you to hear this from me

clearly. God's judgment is real, and deserves our attention. It is terrifying to fall into the hands of the Living God!

But, if we are in Christ, this judgment ought not cause us to live fearfully, as if the latest hardship we face must indicate that we have become displeasing to God, that God's judgment is upon us, and His promises toward us are no longer applicable. No, He is faithful even when we are not.

And the truth is that God's judgment is exact, correct, precise, purposeful, measured. I think of God's judgment upon Egypt during the days of Moses and the plagues. When the angel of death passed over the land killing the firstborn, who's houses were affected? Only the Egyptian households. Those of the Israelites, who had the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorposts were skipped. Their firstborn all lived! This is a picture of God's judgment. It is exact, correct, precise, purposeful, measured.

And even then, God has given us reminders that such times of judgment have an end. After the judgment of the flood against the rebellious people in Noah's day, God provided a sign, a rainbow, an everlasting reminder that there will be an end to such times, that no matter what happens, God will keep His word and remember His commitments to His people. And that is where I am headed this morning. I am here to remind you of the promises of God so that you will have the proper perspective about that which is happening around you.

My message this morning is primarily intended for believers, followers of Jesus. If you've joined us this morning and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, I invite you to become one! Declare to Jesus your commitment to trust Him to save you from the consequences of your sin and trust His work on your behalf

instead of relying on your own goodness or good works. But these promises of God are given to His people, not all people.

I stress this because the promises all center around Jesus. It is because of Him that we have these promises. It is our connection with Him that gives us this status. Because of Him, our identity changes, our perspective on the suffering of this world and lifetime changes. As we have already sung, "I am who you say that I am." And it is not based on anything we have done, right or wrong. Perhaps that is the key point I want you to see this morning.

Main point: God is for His own. God's plans for us are good, not bad. We need not fear falling under His wrath.

Therefore, whatever suffering we are called to endure in this lifetime is NOT to be viewed as a judgment from God, but rather an opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ. Yes, there will be hardship, suffering, unfair suffering. But it is not because God has turned His back on us, rejected us, intends us harm. No, the truth is that nothing can separate us from the love of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Or, as we will read in a moment, "if God is for us, who can be against us?"

The text of this morning is Romans 8:31-39. I invite you to follow along with me as I read Romans 8:31-39.

v.31- What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As we ponder these verses, I challenge you to allow them to minister to you, reminding you of the truth of the situation, even the hardship that you might be facing in light of what God has declared to be true. Use them to fight off the flaming arrows of the evil one who is seeking to kill and destroy. Use the truth to fight against the lies.

## I. Our favor with God is due to Him, not us. vv. 31-34

This is a truth, one that we might all say we believe. But then something bad happens to us and instantly we live as if it is not true. The enemy convinces us either that we are at fault or that God is not being true to His promises. Remember, the enemy's goal is to separate us from our Savior, even though we all know he does not have the power to do so. While it is true that the enemy cannot separate us from our Savior, he can deceive us into thinking we ARE separated. And that is his mission all the time. That is the lie I am fighting this morning with the truth of Scripture. The truth is that our God chose us, knowing everything about us: the good, the bad, and the ugly. And in spite of all that, He chose us. So, if He (who knows all things) chooses us, what makes us think He would change His mind?

v.31- What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?

It is my desire that each of us allow the truth of these words to sink in. God IS for His people, all of His people, each of His people. He is NOT against us. The truth is that He is the friend of sinners, not the enemy of sinners. The truth is that where sin increases, grace increases all the more. So, you cannot out sin God's grace. The truth is that He has called us His own, given us His name,

used terms like “bride” and “beloved” to refer to us. He doesn’t call us, “the old lady” or “my current wife,” or as Adam said, “that woman you gave me.” He lifts us up as a bride in all her beauty.

And the truth is that Jesus demonstrated His own love for us in giving up His Son for people like us, at our worst. He “so loved THE WORLD that He gave His Son.” He made it abundantly clear that He loves us. He loved us first. That doesn’t sound like a God who would suddenly choose to punish us, does it? He is the God of HIS promise, not OUR promise. He is faithful even when we are not.

Now, let me be clear that being a good, good Father does not mean giving your children everything they covet. That would not be good. Can you imagine going up and down the aisles of the grocery store giving your children everything they pointed to? No, giving us “all things” doesn’t mean everything we think we need. It means giving us all things that are in our best interests. He doesn’t withhold good things from us. He is not stingy, nor fickle. He doesn’t use the carrot and stick approach. He is truly the Good, Good Father, the Father by whom all fathers are judged.

33 Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Did you catch that? No one can condemn God's people because their status is due to God, not them. Their position as favored, loved by God was due to God's actions, not theirs. He justified them, gave them status they did not earn. So, how can you lose your status that you got as a gift? You can't. Can you see how this fits in? If you are a follower of Jesus, your status as the beloved of God is not due to nor dependent on you. The one who died for you gave you that status and no one can take it away. Isn't that good news?

As we see here, Jesus is not sitting up in the heavens with a scowl on His forehead as He looks on us. He is there right now interceding on our behalf, asking His Father to put our faults and failures on His account, asking the Father to forgive us. Does this sound like someone who is suddenly against us? Not at all.

II. No one nor thing is able to come between us and our Savior. vv. 35-39

What peaks my interest here are the specific citations of things we MIGHT think would separate us from the love of Christ. Not only is it things we would expect, like spiritual forces. No, it also includes things like natural disaster, world crisis, troubling times. None of those things either is able to separate us from our loving Lord.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

Notice v.36 for context. What they are experiencing is death, helpless death, widespread death, martyrdom perhaps, almost as if it was a pandemic. That is what they were experiencing. So, was all this death proof that they had fallen out of favor with their Lord? Not at all. None of the distress, persecution, famine, lack of basic resources, none of it changed anything with their relationship with God.

Really? Is that how it works? Yes, that is how we are to view it when life seems to go bad. In fact, we are called to view suffering as events intended to grow us, even “sharing in the sufferings of Christ.” We are to welcome such times of trial and tribulation as necessary to bring us to maturity. We are to view them as only temporary, brief, with the best of intentions. Even if they are due to our own failings, they are meant as discipline, not punishment. God certainly disciplines His children, but God does not punish His own. He is a good, good Father, who seeks to draw us closer to Him and have us grow in maturity and understanding. He does have purpose in such suffering. (This will be the subject of a later sermon in this series) But for now, we must remind ourselves that such things are not intended to harm but to help us, grow us, deepen us, knowing that our God is for us, not against us.

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Whenever these bad things happen to us, they will show us to be victorious, not defeated, victorious to the highest degree. When disaster or strife comes upon us, it will prove God's point about us, not the enemy's point. It will show that God was right. His love for us extended right through the worst of times. The enemy tried but failed to accomplish his purposes. The promises of God were validated.

I picture it as God the great machine maker. He designed the machine, made the machine to show His skill at building quality machines that can hold up. They were designed to withstand the rigors of use. And yet, the only way to see if a machine was built well is to test it, put it through the worst conditions. It has to be field tested. But it is not the machine which is being put to the test, it is the maker of the machine. He is the one who made it. His reputation is on the line.

And so, as the Master Builder, God puts that which He has created to the test. And the worst of tests have proven He is the Master Builder. He has taken flawed, failed people and turned them into a new creation, able to withstand the harsh environment and still do great things for their Maker. He has allowed the enemy to push, pull, stretch, squish, isolate, expose, and yet the machine and the Maker are still connected together. The Maker and His creations have passed the test.

38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Can you see that? This present test we are under is intended by God to show how strong the bond is between Him and His people. The enemy wants to divide and conquer. The enemy wants to convince you that God is not the Good, Good Father, that He does NOT have your best interests at heart. The enemy is trying to get you to give up on God, blame Him, curse Him. But the truth is that he cannot separate you from your Savior. He has made you well. You will make it through.

If we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

1) We will remind ourselves of the truth about God, that He is for us, not against us.

2) We will remember that He is the God of the rainbow, the Healer, the Redeemer, the Creator who used the dust of the ground to mold into His beloved.

3) We will rest in His love for us rather than be anxious that He might have abandoned us.

4) We will see these present days as a temporary test that we will win, not because of us, but because of the One who created us, built us, and calls us His own.

Remember, as is written just before the verses we studied this morning, all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose!