

If God be for us

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[0 : 00] And we read from verse 28 down to verse 32. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

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. What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

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?

Two weeks ago we looked together at the confidence that we can have as Christians in approaching God in prayer.

[0 : 59] This evening I want to look with you at the confidence that the people of God can have, especially at times when they may be conscious of many foes lining up against them.

I want to look tonight and also next Sunday night at this section of Romans chapter 8, in order that we might be strengthened and encouraged in our faith, as we look together at what the Apostle Paul has to say to us.

And if we are not Christians, I trust that as we look at this passage and listen to what we are being told here, that we too will want to share with God's people.

And that we too will ask that we might be brought into his family, so that we also might be strengthened and encouraged.

I hope if we are not Christians that this passage will show us how much we are missing out on, how spiritually impoverished we are, if we do not accept God's love in Jesus Christ.

[2 : 14] And I trust that the end result of our meditations will be to bring all of us to the point where we are able to say that we are convinced that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now in order to understand why we are so confident as Christians regarding our standing in Christ against all the attacks that are made upon us, we need to summarise very, very briefly what the Apostle has been saying earlier on in this chapter.

He has been telling us, he has been telling us, firstly, that there is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus. And that being the case, we must ask, are we in Christ Jesus?

Are you in Christ Jesus tonight? If you are, then there is therefore now no condemnation for you.

On the other hand, if you are not in Christ Jesus, you are at this moment under the condemnation of God.

[3 : 41] The second thing that Paul reminds us of in this passage is that God's people are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ.

And that the Spirit who raised Jesus up from the dead will also raise up his people. And I have to ask you this evening, as I must ask myself, is the Spirit of Christ dwelling in our hearts?

Have you been raised from spiritual death by the Spirit of Christ? Have you been raised to newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit?

Because if you have, then you can be sure of this, that that Spirit which has raised you up to newness of life, will one day raise you up from the dead and ensure that you are made altogether like your Saviour.

In this chapter we are told that God's people have a right to be assured of the fact that they belong to him.

[4 : 55] He has given us his Spirit by whom we can approach God and say, Father, I want to ask you, as I ask myself, have we received the Spirit of Sonship?

Can you, can I, can we call God Father? Further in this passage we are told that whatever difficulties we may experience as God's people in this present world, whatever sufferings we may experience as we live our lives here on earth, God promises us that these sufferings are but for a time, and that they cannot even be compared with the glory which is to follow. Now I've got to ask you, as I ask my own heart, about the sufferings that you may be encountering as you live your life in the world.

See, there are many people who say that they believe in hell, but that the only hell in which they believe is the hell that they say people experience on earth.

But when we open the pages of Scripture, we discover that that view of things is quite erroneous. We discover that there are sufferings to follow, the sufferings of this present life, which are quite beyond anything that we can imagine, for those who will not receive salvation through Christ.

[6 : 34] But we're also told in the pages of this Bible that if we receive salvation in and through Christ, then our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

And here we're reminded too that God's people are being interceded for by the one who knows their needs and who's able to provide for all their needs.

And I have to ask you this evening, as again I ask myself, is there one interceding on your behalf in accordance with the will of God?

These are the great truths that the Apostle is bringing before us in the passage leading up to this tremendous section that we're looking at this evening.

And it is in the light of these great truths that he now goes on and says, and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose.

[7 : 55] He is convinced of this great truth that in everything God is working for the good of those who love him. Therefore it follows, does it not, that if you love the Lord, he is working in all things for your good.

Now he's not saying that everything in our life is good. He's not saying that everything is good. But he is saying that in everything he is working for our good.

That's the great message of this verse. And it's the great message that God wants to give us this evening for our encouragement.

You see, as believers, there are times when we may imagine that everything is against us. Jacob on one occasion said, all these things are against me.

It's only as you turn over the pages of Genesis that you come to see that what Jacob thought was against him was in actual fact working together for his good.

[9 : 11] And it's the same with us. There are so many experiences in the Christian life that might make us imagine that everything is against us.

But from God's word, and if the truth be told, from our own experience of God's word, we know that that in actual fact is not the way things are.

We are encouraged, as we look at things from God's perspective, to believe that everything is working together for our good.

Probably the greatest example of all is the cross of Calvary. You look at the cross, and there you see, from a human perspective, the most absurd event in the history of the world.

The most meaningless event of them all, viewed merely from the point of view of this world. What's the point of a man like Jesus Christ being put to death in that manner?

[10 : 31] What's the point? Does Calvary make sense? Was it not wicked men who took him and crucified him? Was it not at their hands that he was slain?

Of course it was. And if that's all there was to it, then the cross gives the lie to this great statement. If that's all that's to it, then the cross is monstrous. From our scriptures we know that behind the cross was the purpose of God.

We know from our Bibles that it pleased the Lord to bruise him and to put him to grief. We know that although he was taken by wicked hands, although he was crucified and slain by wicked hands, nonetheless behind it and involved in it was the determined counsel and for knowledge of God.

So that what appears to be monstrous, what appears to be meaningless, what appears to be the most absurd event ever, what seems so senseless, when seen from God's perspective is the greatest demonstration of wisdom and of power and of love that this world has ever known or will ever know.

[12:21] Because on the cross what we have is God demonstrating his own love towards us. What we have on the cross is the power of God and the wisdom of God on display.

what we have there on the cross is God's purpose being fulfilled, his son accomplishing the work which was given to do.

So that this evening in this church and throughout the Christian church in the world, men and women, boys and girls are stating their hopes for eternity on that cross and are glorying in it and in it alone.

Because men and women, boys and girls enlightened by the spirit have come to realise this and rejoice in this that the cross is all about God's saving purposes coming to pass.

God working in the cross for the good of his own people. Now if that's true of the cross, if that's true of what God has done in Christ, the apostle is arguing that in all the experiences of our lives as believers, the same follows.

[14:00] If we're not in Christ, then we cannot appropriate these promises. We cannot receive comfort and encouragement from a verse such as Romans 8.28 because Romans 8.28 refers specifically to those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose.

But if we do love him and if we have been called by him and know him, then whatever circumstances we may be called upon to go through as individuals or as a church, this truth remains eternal and relevant.

You don't need me to spell out the current difficulties and problems that our own branch of God's church is experiencing.

But this verse is a verse that we need to take to ourselves and take to heart and plead before God because we believe that the church is comprised of the called according to his purpose.

And so we can this evening even although not for a moment excusing anything that is untoward and wrong in the attitude and actions of God's people without for a moment claiming to understand our present crisis we can nonetheless take this verse and be encouraged by it and plead before God that he would indeed work everything together for our good that whose purposes would come to pass.

[16:05] peace. And this is something that I believe God wants us to know for our strengthening and for our encouragement.

but maybe you're here this evening and you don't belong to Christ's church in the spiritual sense. Well I say to you tonight that this particular promise contained in this verse will only be used if you heed the call of the gospel and accept Christ and come into the fellowship of his people.

Then and only then can you appropriate this verse to yourself. There are many experiences that God's people have in life that in and of themselves as I've already mentioned cannot be called good.

But what this verse is telling us is that in all things he is working for good or as the AV puts it God works all things together for the good of those who love him.

I'm only going to use one illustration this evening. If any of you have seen tweed being woven you will know that it takes many different types of colour to merge together to form the pattern that produces the tweed.

[17:42] if somebody came into a loom shed and simply looked at one side of the loom he might be attracted to some of the threads on account of their colour whilst others would be so dull that he might ask the weaver why bother with these at all.

But should the weaver take him to the other side of the loom he would see there how all the threads were needed for the pattern to be complete. Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly will God unroll the canvas and reveal the reason why the dark threads are as needful in the weaver's stilled hands as the threads of gold and silver for the pattern he has planned.

Praise God for that. He works everything together for our good. And we're told further in this passage that God's purposes are coming to pass even in the perplexing providences of our lives. We're told that God foreknew his people. That's something that the Bible states categorically again and again.

That before we were even formed he knew us. He set his affection on his people before they were even made. He fixed his mind and his heart on his people before they were even in the womb.

[19:20] And that truth is revealed for one particular purpose for the encouragement of God's people. He didn't just foreknow we're told here that he predestined them.

And if any biblical doctrine has taken a battering over the years it's the doctrine of predestination and little wonder because so very often the way this truth has been portrayed really leaves people imagining that what's been preached is faithfulism and that everything is out of our hands and that we are puppets on a string and that we have no responsibilities regarding our own salvation. Well if that impression is conveyed it's either because there's something wrong with the way the message is communicated or it's because the devil is busily working in the minds of those who are hearing the message twisting it distorting it to that end.

In the Bible and in this passage even we're told that God foreknew and predestined those whom he foreknew to be conformed to the likeness of his son that he might be the first born among many brothers.

The purpose of predestination is never to allow any who hear of it to put as it were a pillow under their heads and go to sleep excusing themselves for doing nothing about their salvation.

[21 : 24] The purpose of this truth being presented is in order to encourage those who are in Christ to know that in all things God is working so as to conform them to the likeness of his son Jesus.

And it's a wonderful thing to realize that all the things that God orders in our providence is as a result of the fact that he has foreknown us and predestined us to this end that we might be like Jesus and that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Now that is always but always the emphasis in scripture when this doctrine is brought before us. I was reading only today a snippet in this month's monthly record where the editor quotes Spurgeon who was asked one day to reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility and his answer was typical I never try he said to reconcile friends.

I never try to reconcile friends. There is no contradiction between these two truths. The fact that God is sovereign in no way contradicts the other truth that we are responsible for making our calling and our election sure and that's what I'm on to next.

Those he predestined he also called. How do I know or how can I know you may be saying that I'm one of the chosen ones?

[23 : 19] I can tell it by asking myself this have I heard the call of God in the gospel and responded to it? Have I responded to the call of the gospel to come to Christ?

If I have then I can be assured that these doctrines apply to me and if I haven't I have to ask whose fault is that?

If God is asking us in the gospel to come to him and he is if God is addressing the whosoever and demanding that we accept what he's done for sinners like us in Christ and he is then that leaves us without excuse if we've not responded to the call of the gospel and so I ask this evening how can I be assured that I'm among the chosen of God?

it's by making my calling sure that's why in that version Peter he doesn't say make your election and your calling sure he doesn't say that that's impossible what he says is make your calling and your election sure it's by making your calling sure that you can know that the rest belongs to you as well and so we're told here that those he called he also justified that means I know it means a lot more than I'm going to say it means tonight but it means that the people whom he's speaking of here have been made right with God through Jesus Christ I know that there's perhaps a rather superficial definition of being justified that goes along the lines it's justified just a play on the words just as if I'd never sinned well I think that's rather shallow and superficial myself and yet there's truth in it because if we are justified there's a sense in which it's just as if I'd never sinned in the sense that my sins are forgiven my sins are covered my sins are removed

I'm right with God God looks on me and sees no sin in me God looks on Israel and Jacob and sees no sin justified and those he justified he also glorified now you say that's that's strange that's strange because you might say I know that there are people in this church tonight whom God foreknew whom God predestined whom God called whom God justified but looking around this church this evening I don't think there's anyone present tonight of whom we can say that God has glorified them don't see anyone with halos don't see anyone with with a look above them that suggests that they've been glorified how then can Paul speak this how can he use this tense for one very obvious reason

[26 : 59] Paul is telling us here that if these other things are true of us then our glorification is also certain there can be no doubt but that God will glorify us if all the other links that we find in this chain are in the right place it's as sure and certain as if it's already happened even though it hasn't happened as yet now it's on that basis that Paul tells us we can have great confidence before God

in the face of every attack that may be made upon us both individually and collectively what then he says shall we say in response to this what then shall we say in response how are we to look at ourselves tonight in Christ in the light of this well this is his answer if God is for us and really in the original it isn't if

God is for us at all it's since God is for us because God is for us on account of the fact that he is for us who can be against us how do we know God is for us again we are back to the cross we can't stray too far from it if we are Christians tonight we know that God did not spare his son but that he gave him up for us all that's the one thing we are sure of and notice this for us all applying it to the whole true church of Christ this is the one thing the true church of Jesus Christ can be certain of tonight that God did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all what greater do we need than that to be assured that

God's purposes has been fulfilled concerning us and here Paul is saying because that's the case because of what God has done for us in Christ we know that he's for us and because we know what he's done for us in Christ and because we know that he's for us how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things all that we need to live to his honour and praise and glory because God has given us as Lloyd Jones used to put it the greatest will he not give us that which is less how can he withhold from us that which is less if he has already given us the greatest gift of all and if we're Christians that's what we're saying tonight we're saying that we know that he's given us his greatest gift therefore whatever opposition we may face whatever ups and downs there may be in our individual or collective

Christian experience we know that God will give us all that we need to live for him the mighty Lord said the psalmist and very nearly finished the mighty Lord is on my side I will not be afraid for anything that man can do I shall not be dismayed but maybe you're not in Christ maybe you can't say that you've received God's greatest gift I say to you tonight seek first his kingdom and righteousness all these things will be added to you I say it because God's word says it and I say it because I know with Paul that my

God is able to supply all you need according to his glorious riches through Christ Jesus all God's people know these things to be true and all God's people long for you to come to know them as well no weapon that is formed against the Lord's people can prosper we're going on to look at that in what follows here in Romans 8 God willing next week tonight I must ask you as I ask myself have you and have I this confidence before God remember he will withhold no good thing from them that uprightly do live we can only begin to live upright lives when we receive whose righteousness may we receive whose righteousness may we rejoice in the

[32 : 54] Lord of righteousness and may we resolve in all things to accept that he is working together for our good there were many other things that I meant to bring before you this evening but I trust that that will suffice to convince us all from the word of God of the confidence that we can have in him come what may however the enemy may attack from without or from within since God before us who can be against us Lord bless these thoughts to us we would accept all that you have done in the Lord

Jesus Christ that we might be saved and come with your people need to that relationship with you that nothing can ever sever because we know even from that passage that nothing in all creation what a statement that is that nothing in all creation shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord may we know that love for ourselves that we might glorify you and honour you in all that we think and say and do from day to day for Christ's sake Amen de day ta t t night tt night guest day night day evening night h afternoon morning night night night t week night day day night day