

Nothing Can Separate Us

Freddy Fritz / General Adult

Assurance of God's Salvation / Resurrection; Question; Condemnation / Romans 8:31–39
Romans 8:31-39 teaches us that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because of five unanswerable questions.

Introduction

Anyone who studies the Bible carefully knows that there are times when we reach a soaring peak of revelation and are left nearly breathless by the view.

This happens when we come to the last great section of [Romans 8](#).

Commentators have called [Romans 8:31-39](#) “a hymn of assurance,” “a triumph song,” and “the highest plateau in the whole of divine revelation.”

But surely these accolades are too weak.

This is a mountaintop section.

It is the Mount Everest of Paul’s letter to the Romans and thus the highest peak in the Himalayan range of the Scriptures.

On this Resurrection Sunday, let us be encouraged by the truth that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Scripture

Let’s read [Romans 8:31-39](#)

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.**

Lesson

Strictly speaking, there are seven questions in these verses, two in verses 31 and 35, and one in verses 32, 33, and 34.

But the first question is not part of the set.

It is a formula Paul has for moving from exposition to the conclusion of an argument.

He has used it several times in this letter to the Romans.

Paul asks in verse 31, **“What then shall we say to these things?”**

In other words, “In light of what I have been teaching, what conclusions follow?”

Then follow five unanswerable questions.

The last two questions in verse 35 are two parts of the same question.

So there are five main questions.

These five questions concern things that might be imagined to defeat God’s plan for us or to harm us.

But each question is unanswerable, because there is nobody or nothing that can defeat God’s plan for us.

Commentator John Stott says,

“The Apostle hurls these questions out into space, as it were, defiantly, triumphantly, challenging any creature in heaven or earth or hell to answer them or deny the truth contained in them. But there is no answer, for nobody and nothing can harm the redeemed people of God.”

[Romans 8:31-39](#) teaches us that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because of five unanswerable questions.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. “Who Can Be Against Us?” (8:31b)
2. “How Will He Not also... Give Us All Things (8:32)
3. “Who Shall Bring Any Charge?” (8:33)
4. “Who Is to Condemn?” (8:34)
5. “Who Shall Separate Us from the Love of Christ?” (8:35-39)

I. “Who Can Be Against Us?” (8:31b)

The first of five unanswerable questions is in verse 31b: **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”**

Taken by itself, the second half of this question is not at all unanswerable.

“Who can be against us?”

Why, many people and many things can be against us!

And not only *can* they be against us, but they *are* against us!

The Bible teaches that every Christian has three great enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The *world* is against us because Christianity is an offense to it and is opposed to its God-rebelling ways.

The world will try to get us to conform to it if it can, and failing that, it will try to overcome us.

Our *flesh* is also an enemy because it contains the seeds of sin; we are unable to escape its malevolent influence throughout our lives.

And, as if that were not enough, we have a powerful enemy in the *devil*, described by the apostle Peter as “a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” ([1 Peter 5:8](#)).

Yes, there are plenty of enemies against us.

But what are these when combined with the verse’s first half, **“If God is for us...”**?

There’s the good news of God!

In Greek, four kinds of conditional clauses use the word **“if.”**

The word **“if”** in this sentence implies no doubt.

Paul has just banished doubt in the previous verses.

He has shown us how God has foreknown us by setting his love upon us and predestined us to conform to the likeness of his beloved Son.

Then, he has called us, justified us, and glorified us.

In verse 31, **“if”** means “since.”

“Since God is for us”—and that makes all the difference in the world!

It is as if Paul is challenging us to place all possible enemies on one side of an old-fashioned balance scale, as if we were weighing feathers.

Then, when we have all the feathers assembled on the scale, he drops a brick onto the other side.

That side comes crashing down, and the feathers scatter in the wind.

“If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Who can stand against God?

The answer, of course, is “No one”!

Nothing and no one can defeat us if Almighty God is on our side.

II. “How Will He Not also... Give Us All Things?” (8:32)

“But,” says someone, “that assumes God does not change towards us. No one can indeed stand against God. But what if God should grow tired of us, forget about us, or move on to something else?”

Paul deals with this speculation in verse 32, which is the second unanswerable question, asking, “**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?**”

Each of these five questions is unanswerable because each is grounded upon some undeniable truth, and the undeniable truth in this verse is that God has given us his Son.

If Paul had merely asked, “Will God give us all things?” we might hesitate, for how could we be confident that he would?

He has given us much, to be sure.

But **all things?**

Wouldn't we be right to think that even God has limits to his grace and generosity?

That might be reasonable to think, were it not for the fact that God has already given us his Son.

Jesus is the greatest gift God has to give.

Yet he gave him—and not merely to be with us in some mystical way.

He gave him over to death so that we might be rescued from the judgment due to us for our sins.

Paul challenges us to look at the cross and reason as follows: If God did that for us, sending his own Son, Jesus, to die in our place, is there anything that can be imagined that God would withhold from us?

Years ago, a Bible teacher was speaking to some children.

He said he would give ten dollars to anyone who could think of a promise that God might have made to us that he has not already made.

The teacher might as well have offered a billion dollars, because our text tells us that God has already guaranteed us **“all things”** since he has not withheld his Son.

Listen!

This verse is a blank check for all our actual needs.

For example, we need strength to overcome temptation.

By ourselves, we cannot resist the temptation to sin.

Will God give us the strength we need to overcome temptation?

Of course, he will.

Paul says, “No temptation that is not common to man has overtaken you. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#)).

Further, we all need a friend to be with us through life’s dark places, so we will not lose hope.

Will God be a friend to us?

Absolutely.

Jesus said, “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends...” ([John 15:15](#)).

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” ([Matthew 28:20](#)).

Do we need direction for how we are to live and please God?

God himself will provide that direction. God says, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go” ([Psalm 32:8a](#)).

Do we need comfort when we have lost a loved one?

God is the only sure source of comfort.

Jesus promised, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever” ([John 14:16](#)).

Will God be with us in death's dark hour?

Of course, he will.

He will sustain us in death and bring us joyfully into his glorious presence.

The Bible says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" ([Psalm 116:15](#)).

And in case somehow we think that some critical need of ours has been overlooked, we remember Paul's words to the Philippians, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" ([Philippians 4:19](#)).

If God gave us Jesus, the greatest of all possible gifts, he can also be counted on to provide us with all the lesser gifts.

As John Stott says, "The cross proves [God's] generosity."

III. "Who Shall Bring Any Charge?" (8:33)

The third unanswerable question moves into the legal area, as if we were now in a court of law, asking whether someone might exist somewhere to accuse us and thus bring us into final spiritual condemnation before God.

The question is in verse 33, "**Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?**"

Who could do that, Paul asks, since "**it is God who justifies**"?

Do you remember that great scene in the prophet Zechariah where the high priest of that day, Joshua, was standing in the temple, no doubt preparing to present the people's sacrifice, and Satan was also there, accusing him?

Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes, symbolizing his sin.

The devil was arguing that Joshua was unfit for his office because he was a sinner.

But God was also there, and he rebuked Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" ([Zechariah 3:2](#)).

Then we are told how Joshua's filthy clothes were removed and how he was clothed with rich garments and a clean turban, symbols of his justification through the work of Jesus Christ.

Who could accuse him now?

The answer is clear: no one, no one at all.

Why?

Because God had justified him.

This is the picture Paul's question brings to mind.

Many bring charges against us—the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But, if we are **God's elect**, the apostle Paul states emphatically, **"It is God who justifies."**

Indeed, God *has* justified us (see vs. 30).

Who could secure our condemnation when the highest Judge of all—God—has already acquitted us?

IV. "Who Is to Condemn?" (8:34)

The fourth unanswerable question is so closely related to the third question that some have considered it to be asking the same thing.

Yet there is a difference.

Paul had earlier asked whether the good purposes of God toward us could change, concluding that they could not, since God has already given us Jesus, the greatest of all gifts (8:32).

Now, Paul goes further, asking whether Jesus' attitude could change.

Verse 34 asks the question: **"Who is to condemn?"**

Paul answers, **"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."**

The Bible teaches this truth in a striking image, using the word *paraclete* (or lawyer) for both the Holy Spirit and for Jesus.

A *paraclete* is “one called alongside another to help,” which is also the exact meaning of the word *advocate*.

The only difference is that one is derived from Greek and the other from Latin.

Jesus used this word of the Holy Spirit when he told the disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to be their Helper ([John 16:5-15](#)).

John used the word to refer to Jesus, saying that in him, we have an “advocate with the Father” ([1 John 2:1](#)).

This is a picture of a divine law firm with two branches, a heavenly office and an earthly office.

On earth, the Holy Spirit pleads for us, interpreting our petitions correctly to the Father.

And in heaven, Jesus pleads the efficacy of his shed blood—and the resurrection is proof that God accepted Jesus’ sacrifice—to show that we are saved persons and that nothing can now rise to cause our condemnation by the Father.

V. “Who Shall Separate Us from the love of Christ?” (8:35-39)

The final, all-embracing, and climactic unanswerable question is in verse 35: **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”**

The answer carries us to the chapter’s end.

With this fifth and final question, Paul himself does what we have been doing with his other four questions.

He looks around for a possible answer.

He brings forward all the enemies he can think of, which might **separate us from the love of Christ**.

We may have to endure **“tribulation, or distress, or persecution”**—the pressures of an ungodly world.

We may have to undergo **“famine or nakedness”**—that is, the lack of adequate food and clothing, which, since Jesus promised them to the heavenly Father’s children, might seem to be evidence that God does not care.

We may even have to experience **“danger or sword”**—that is, the danger of death and actual death, and even martyrdom, the ultimate test of our faith.

These are real tests.

Scripture warns us in [Psalm 44:22](#) that God’s people are for his sake facing **“being killed all the day long.”**

That is, we are continuously being exposed to the risk of death, like sheep for the slaughter.

These are enemies indeed.

These are real sufferings, painful and perilous, and hard to bear.

But can they **separate us from the love of Christ?**

No!

Far from separating us from the love of Christ, **“in all these things”**—in these very sufferings, in the experience and endurance of them—**“we are more than conquerors.”**

Nothing, beloved, can separate us from the love of Christ!

Conclusion

So, **“What then shall we say to these things?”** (8:31a).

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (8:31b).

No one!

“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?” (8:32).

He gave us Jesus; he will also give us all we need.

“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?” (8:33a).

No one!

Why?

Because **“it is God who justifies”** (8:33b).

“Who is to condemn?” (8:34a).

No one!

Moreover, **“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”** (8:34b).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword?” (8:35).

No! No! No! A thousand times no!

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 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” (8:37-39).

Let me ask, " What do *you* say to these things?"

What is *your* response?

One possibility is that you may be indifferent to the question and the doctrines of God’s grace behind it.

You couldn’t care less about the answer because you think the whole thing is utter foolishness.

Or, you may respond with hostility.

You think it is arrogant to believe that God has shown special favor to some people.

You don’t believe that God acts in such an excellent way.

Or, you may respond with great joy.

You believe there is no condemnation for you because you are in Christ Jesus.

And as you hear all that God has done for you in Christ, your heart swells with overflowing joy.

You believe that God’s love is indeed great.

You believe that his love for you is the very foundation of your salvation.

You know that you love God because he first loved you.

You know he demonstrated his love by sending his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to live, die, and rise for you.

You believe that the love of God in Christ is the greatest reality in the universe.

It is the strongest, most steady, firm, unbending, solid, substantial, constant, uniform, dependable truth.

So I ask, “What do you say in response to these five unanswerable questions?”

Do they strike a positive note in you?

Do you find yourself rejoicing?

Do you find yourself saying, “Yes! This is true!”

If so, it proves that God is working in your life, bringing you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

But if this teaching does not seem appealing to you—if it does not seem true or if you regard it with indifference—I warn you that you are not a Christian and do not know the Lord Jesus Christ in a saving way.

Therefore, I present him to you as Savior.

I urge you to repent of your sin and turn to him in faith.

This very gospel, the good news of the love of God in Jesus Christ, is commended to you.

As Paul wrote, “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” ([Romans 5:8](#)).

“What then do you say to these things?”

May God give you the grace to respond to this message with great joy by believing the truth about the good news of God. Amen.