“God Is For Us”

October 28, 2018

Psalm 118:5-16

Please find with me the eighth chapter of the Book of Romans.

Psalm 78 is a song that describes what it was like when the people of Israel were in the wilderness. And here’s what it was like in those days. Time after time God had done amazing things as He provided for His people. But the main story of the days of the wilderness isn’t the greatness of God for all His dealings with the Jews. It’s this. Time after time, whether it was the plagues He sent upon the Egyptians, whether it was the Red Sea crossing, or the daily supply of Manna, here’s what happened. Instead of filling their hearts and minds with what *God* said or what He had done, they provoked Him. They grieved Him. And they limited the LORD. Here’s how Asaph described the Jews of that day.

Psalm 78:40 *“How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! (41) Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.”*

But, before I stand in judgment of the Jews of those days, I have to check my own heart and mind to see if I’m doing the same thing.

Let me show you what I mean. Look with me at the thirty-first verse of this eighth chapter. Romans 8:31 *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”*

Just like the Jews, Christians also limit the LORD. How? The way we limit Him is like this. We live our lives according to what *we* think and not according to what *He* says.

So, I’ve titled today’s sermon “God Is For Us.” Shall we pray?

Can you remember a time in your life when you thought someone was mad at you only to find out later that it was all you, all in *your* mind, and they, in no way, were they upset or mad at you at all? And they said to you that nothing could be further from the truth.

That’s what has happened to some of us when we come to the Bible; especially to things we think are too good to be true; like these two verses. Romans 8:31 *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”*

The problem is the same problem the Jews had. They limited God and we limit Him. Our viewpoint and our interpretation of what God allows in our lives is quite often wrong. What you and I need is this approach, “What does God say?”

This last section of Romans eight is the culmination of Paul’s entire message to the Roman Christians. And I absolutely know the reason why. Here it is. We, all of us, we evaluate God by the things in our lives versus the things He says. We pass judgment on God.

And how many of you have said this “All these things are against me”? When you face a financial setback, you say “All these things are against me.” When you suffer physically or emotionally or when someone offends you deeply, you say “All these things are against me.” When you have a difficult trial to endure, you say “All these things are against me.” And what happens in your heart when you have a very large family issue come up? Don’t you sometimes think that God is against you?

And yet, what does God say in contrast to what you and I think? He says *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”*

So, here’s what’s on my heart today.

First, the question, what this verse is *not* saying.

Let me begin with the phrase “against us.”

Now, if you know your Bible, you know that there are plenty of quote “against” us things. Isn’t, for example, the devil against you? Aren’t the principalities and powers of hell against you? Ephesians 6:12 *“For we wrestle not* ***against*** *flesh and blood, but* ***against*** *principalities,* ***against*** *powers,* ***against*** *the rulers of the darkness of this world,* ***against*** *spiritual wickedness in high places.”*

And aren’t fleshly lusts against you? I Peter 2:11 *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war* ***against*** *the soul; …”*

And when someone persecutes you, aren’t they quote “against” you? Acts 14:1 *“And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. (2) But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected* ***against*** *the brethren.”*

So, both Biblically and practically, much, very much is against us. That means, then, that that is not what Paul is saying in Romans 8:31. Romans 8:31 *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

First, the question, what this verse is *not* saying.

Second, the question again, what *is* God saying?

So, what is he saying?

One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is right here. The Christian lives in the reality of what God says and not what man thinks. And Romans 8:31, Paul’s conclusion to his masterpiece on Christianity says this, in essence. “Look at the big picture. Your life is oftentimes so baffling it can appear like it’s a one thousand piece jigsaw puzzle. And today is just one piece of that puzzle. Simply put, the reason things are sometimes baffling to you and me is because we aren’t resting in what God sees and we are not believing what God says.”

By “against” Paul is saying that anything you might consider as against you is not against. In reality, it’s for you.

Do you remember Romans 8:28? How many times have you said to God “Thank you for this one thing because I know that you are using it for my good?”

Romans 8:28 *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

Folks, if God, your Heavenly Father and the Sovereign God of the universe is at work in your life, then He alone is responsible for you. He’s conforming you into the image of His Wonderful Son, the LORD Jesus. And He will one day bring you into perfect conformity to Him. Everyone who is justified will be glorified. He has all the time in the world and He takes time and very great thought in bringing into your life everything. And why? He’s working all these things “for” you and not “against” you.

Your opinion of what God allows in this world or what He allows in your life is just that; your opinion. And it’s not your opinion that matters as much as was God says. That’s what really matters. And, as you mature in Christ, you learn more and more that God’s hand and God’s ways are simply an expression of God’s Word.

So, can anyone or anything supersede God when it comes to His work upon His children?

The following is a true story. It comes from Hudson Taylor’s autobiography. As you likely know, Hudson Taylor attended medical school before traveling to China as a missionary. His desire was to help people physically as well as spiritually.

And, like so many medical missionaries, Hudson needed lots of supplies for his various places of ministry throughout China. He decided the best thing to do was to keep all of his medical equipment and supplies in one location and retrieve them as they were needed. So, he set up a storage unit in the city of Shanghai to hold all of his medical things. It was 1856 and he needed some of those supplies. So, he made a trip to Shanghai. Here’s how he puts it.

*“Upon reaching Shanghai, great was my dismay to find that the premises in which my medicines and instruments had been stored were burnt down, and that all the medicines and many of the instruments were entirely destroyed. To me this appeared a great calamity, and I fear I was more disposed with faithless Jacob to say, ‘All things are against me,’ than to recognize that ‘All things work together for good.’ I had not then learned to think… of all external circumstances as necessarily the kindest, wisest, best, because either ordered or permitted by God.”*

Aren’t we a whole lot like Hudson Taylor when tragedy comes our way or when hard times arrive or when trials overwhelm us? What we so often are tempted to do is to go from a season of faith into a season of doubt. And, you may, like some feel as though God is against you.

Then, by the year 1859, Hudson Taylor had established a hospital in which many people needed overnight accommo-dations, which, of course, meant that they would need to be fed.

It wasn’t long before he ran out of money to feed his patients. And the organization to which he belonged at the time, the Chinese Evangelization Society, had promised in letter after letter to send him money, which was not arriving and if it were ever to come, not arriving when it was most greatly needed.

Then, when he and his hospital staff were down to their last bag of rice, something happened. On the very last day of their rice supply a letter came in the mail. In that letter was a fifty pound note, comparable to $220.00 in our U.S. currency in the 1850’s and comparable to $8,000.00 in our economy today. The letter and the money came from a Mr. William Berger, a very successful businessman who had just received an inheritance and wanted to use it to advance the kingdom of God.

[Found on <https://thebensmartblog.wordpress.com> by Ben Smart “Hudson Taylor’s Last Bag of Rice” July 7, 2018].

Here’s what Dr. Taylor wrote in his autobiography.

*“All these things are against me.” But oh, how false the word! The cold, and even the hunger, the watchings and sleeplessness of nights of danger, and the feeling at times of utter isolation and helplessness, were well and wisely chosen, and tenderly and lovingly meted out. What circumstances could have rendered the Word of God more sweet,*

*the presence of God more real, the help of God more precious? They were times, indeed, of emptying and humbling, but were experiences that made not ashamed, and that strengthened purpose to go forward as God might direct, with His proved promise, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” One can see, even now, that “as for God, His way is perfect,” and yet can rejoice that the missionary path of today is comparatively a smooth and an easy one.”*

[Found on [www.wholesomewords.org](http://www.wholesomewords.org) Hudson Taylor “A Retrospect” page 29].

Years later, in 1867 something else happened in Hudson’s life. His daughter Grace died of meningitis at the age of eight. [Found on <https://thebensmartblog.wordpress.com> by Ben Smart “When Suffering Strikes Us, Is God Against Us?” April 30, 2018].

Folks, nothing can be against you. That’s what God says. And He cannot lie to you.

First, the question, what this verse is *not* saying.

Second, the question again, what *is* God saying?

Third, the question again, what shall we say then to these things?

This final section of Romans eight, remember, is the Apostle Paul’s grand payoff; the conclusion to one of the greatest descriptions of Christianity ever written.

So, the question again.

What a question! This is Paul’s response to what he’s just said. And what things are so important that Paul would ask *“What shall we then say to these things?”*

What is the only legitimate conclusion you can draw from these things? Let me answer that by getting you to see what thing he has just written.

First, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ; v. 1

Second, you are free from the law of sin and death; v. 2

Third, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; v. 9

Fourth, Christ is in you; v. 10

Fifth, we’ve been given the Spirit of sonship; v. 15

Sixth, the Spirit testifies to our spirits that we are the children of God; v. 16

Seventh, the Spirit helps our weaknesses, in particular, our weakness in the area of prayer; v. 26

Eighth, everything in the Believer’s life is working together for his/her good; v. 28

And ninth, everyone who is justified will be glorified; v. 29-30

Then comes Romans 8:31 *“What shall we then say to these things? ...”*

In light of these nine things, here’s the only thing worth saying *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”*

First, the question, what this verse is *not* saying.

Second, the question again, what *is* God saying?

Third, the question again, what shall we say then to these things?

Fourth, and finally, our highest condition in life.

Look with me at the very first word of Paul’s answer *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”*

“If” has a variety of meanings. But it always implies a condition. And here’s what it means. “If” means “since.” So, here’s what it says in the original. Romans 8:31 *“What shall we then say to these things? If [Since] God be for us, who can be against us?”*

This is what an English teacher would tell you is a first class condition. Here it is “If it’s true, and it is.” So Paul is saying this “Since it’s true that God is for us, then who can be against us?”

Do you remember what the devil said to Jesus when he had brought Him to the temple to tempt Him? He said this. Matthew 4:6 *“And saith unto him, if thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”*

Now look a little closer at what Satan said. Matthew 4:6 *“And saith unto him, If [SINCE] thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”*

And Paul says this in Colossian 3:1 *“If [SINCE] ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”*

You might even call this “The If Condition.” This first class condition is found nearly three hundred times in the Bible. And every time it can be translated “Since.”

So, this is the highest condition in life. God is for you.

Now, just how practical is this passage? Here’s how practical it is. When you want something to strengthen your faith when the props of your life have been knocked out from under you, go back to the passages in your Bible that use the word “since.” Paul’s point is that there is absolutely no doubt about what he’s saying.

But, so often we limit God simply because we don’t know what He’s said. Can you see the problem? It’s the same problem you face every single day. Is the LORD “for you” or is He “against you”? Is He ever against you now that you have come to Him and received His salvation? Some Christians struggle immensely because they aren’t sure whether God is for them or not. So, practically speaking, can God ever be against you?

And the answer is “no, never.” That’s what He says. Yet, sometimes you “feel” that He is. You “feel” it in the exact same way that a children or a teenager sometimes “feels” as though his father or mother is against him. But, what is the reality? Your parents are not against you. Neither is the LORD against you.

Paul then answers his own question is “Since God is for you, can anyone or anything be against you. Answer; no; no one and no thing can be against you.” Nothing that comes your way can ever imply that God is against you.

So, let’s apply what the Bible says. Here’s what you can do today. Take Romans 8:31 and make it personal; like this.

Romans 8:31 *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for Me, who can be against Me? (32) He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for Me, how shall he not with him also freely give Me all things?”*

So, what if something happens to you today and your thought is to believe the lie that God is against you, what should you do? Just two things: reject the thought because of what God says and accept the truth of Romans 8. It’s a clear choice every time.

The truth is that the Creator of the universe, your Heavenly Father is not and cannot ever be against you. Christ has accomplished for you this wonderful “I am for you” relationship and that can never, ever change. God is always for you. Period.

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 353 “Victory In Jesus”