

Romans 8:31-32 What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³²Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?

I remember one time I got a brochure from a WELS congregation in Wisconsin. One of my classmates was one of the pastors there. It was printed on yellow paper and it said “God’s Yellow Pages” on the top. You see, there used to be these things called phone books that the telephone company would print every year with everyone’s name, address, and phone number. The yellow pages were where all the local businesses were listed. A couple of Green Bay phone books boosted my monitor stand for my computer for years.

Even though the term “yellow pages” is an anachronism now, the brochure was very handy. It listed several places in the Bible that you could turn to in various times in life. If you are about to get married, why not read Ephesians 5? If you are feeling sad, why not read the beautiful words of Psalm 23 again? The book I use for pre-marriage classes has a big section at the end with passages to help you out in the different ups and downs of life.

One of the chapters of the Bible that should be near and dear to your heart is Romans 8. You would be hard pressed to find more powerful, comforting words written in any book in any language. The text for today is just two verses from that chapter, but they do an excellent job of summing up the message of that chapter and really the message of the Gospel itself. This text gives us Christmas Confidence. God is for us and God gives the best gifts.

Paul begins by asking us a question. He’s not really looking for an answer and he couldn’t hear us even if we gave him one. He wants us to think about it and take it to heart, **“What then will we say about these things?”** So what “things” are you talking about Paul? He is referring to the entire chapter and especially to the three verses that he just got done writing.

At the beginning of that chapter Paul writes, **“So then, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** Jesus’ perfect life and innocent death paid the perfect price that God demanded for our sin. So God cannot condemn us any longer because he condemned his Son in our place. That message changes everything for us. It removes all fear and doubt from our hearts.

Then Paul reminds us that our freedom from condemnation doesn’t mean that we should just live however we want. We are free to live for God. Even though we see that the whole world is affected by sin, we have a real and living hope of eternal life with him in heaven. We can go to him in prayer confidently. The Holy Spirit speaks for us when we can’t find the words to say.

Right before this text Paul sums up everything that God has done for us, **“We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose, ²⁹because those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. And those he justified, he also glorified.”**

How do you even begin to respond to that? Somehow “thank you” seems to fall terribly short. God isn’t looking for us to pay him back. He just wants us to know and believe everything he has done for us. Paul goes on to ask another powerful question for us to ponder, **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** That question is so simple but it is simply amazing.

God is for us! Why? Logically there is no reason for him to be for us. He made all of creation for us. It was perfect. He wanted to have a personal relationship with us like a father and child. But we decided that it isn’t enough. Satan convinced Adam and Eve that God was holding something back from them. Turns out, he was right. God was keeping evil away from us but we went diving headlong into it.

But God is for us anyway, not just once he made us believers. He was for us when we were still lost, condemned, hopeless, and spiritually dead. Just like a good father doesn’t kick his kid to the curb when he sins, God didn’t want to have to follow through on the threats in his Law. Instead he came up with a plan so that his holy Law could be upheld, but at the same time he could save us from the fate we deserved.

We see that solution lying in the manger today. God the Son became the son of Mary. The Creator of the entire universe lies helpless in a manger of all places. The Creator has become one of his creations. God took on human flesh so that he could be subject to the Law just like we are, but be able to obey it perfectly in our place. As a human being he could die, but as true God that death would be sufficient to pay for every single sin.

Since all of that is true—and it is—then **“who can be against us?”** It might seem like everybody is. Paul even quotes from Psalm 44 later in this chapter, **“For your sake we are being put to death all day long. We**

are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” That’s a pretty serious picture, isn’t it. People allow us to exist simply so that they will have the pleasure of killing us.

The Apostle Peter describes Satan this way, **“Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”** So certainly he is against us, right? In the book of Revelation he is described as **“the accuser of our brothers...the one who accuses them before our God day and night.”** That’s what the name Satan literally means, “the Accuser.”

Remember what God promised that the Savior would do. He told Satan in the Garden of Eden, **“He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.”** If your head is crushed, that is a fatal blow. There is no recovering from that. So Satan can still rant and rave all he wants, but those things are nothing more than the throes of death. He is judged. He is condemned. The battles will rage on, but the war is already over.

So if the single biggest threat to our spiritual and eternal life has been made powerless, who also could possibly threaten us? Could some corrupt politician secretly pass a series of laws that would eliminate the power of God? Is there any terrorist who could tear us away from the God who is all powerful, all knowing, and present everywhere? Is there any disease that could be proof that God is gone? God has spoken. He is for us. He loves us. He saved us. God said it so it is true. End of discussion.

This text gives us Christmas Confidence. God is for us and God gives the best gifts.

The second verse of this text begins with some words that I think that too many people overlook. He describes God as **“he who did not spare his own Son.”** Think about that for a second. God did not spare his one and only Son for us. That is almost completely and utterly unbelievable. We failed. We sinned. We deserve death and Hell. So what does God do? He punished his Son instead of us. What kind of Father does that? Of course, we need to remember that Jesus was not unwilling to go. He completely agreed with his heavenly Father’s plan because he loves us that much.

I am the father of three sons and one daughter. I would do anything to spare them from harm. I remember when Christian, my firstborn, got sick for the first time. He just sat on the couch with his blanket with his big eyes just glazed over and staring off into the distance. That was just a cold. Nothing serious. Nothing major. But if God would have given me the ability to take that cold on myself so he could be spared from it, I would have done it in a heartbeat.

So now imagine if someone from a Federal penitentiary came up to me and said, “We have a murderer on death row who is scheduled to be executed next week. We want to take your son and put him on the electric chair so that we can put that murderer back on the streets.” I would give them a look that would clearly say, “Are you out of your tiny little mind? Don’t even try it or I might just end up in prison too.”

Yet that’s exactly what God did. I like to think of myself as a loving person, but that kind of self-sacrificing love is beyond my ability to even comprehend. I even heard one person who clearly wasn’t a Christian describe this as “divine child abuse.” I’m not surprised that they would say that because God’s plan completely defies our logic. It even seems to defy God’s logic who said, **“The soul who sins is the one who will die.”**

But think of what Jesus said not long before he went to the cross, **“Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, this is the reason I came to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name!”** Jesus was not dragged to the cross kicking and screaming. He knew that the only way that people could be forgiven and have eternal life is for him to go to the cross. His great love for us gave him no other option but to go.

It has been said that every journey begins with a single step. Today we celebrate God’s first step in carrying out the plan of salvation that he made before day one of creation. God gave us the first and greatest Christmas present—the gift of a baby boy in Bethlehem. The real reason that we give each other presents isn’t because little Johnny really needs another toy. They should remind us of the gift of the Christ-child.

When people are Christmas shopping you sometimes hear them say, “What do you get for the person who has everything?” That question really describes each and every one of us. If we have a Savior, and we do, what else do we need? I mean, I can earn a living. I can feed myself. I can do all of those things, but the one thing I cannot do is make myself right with God now and forever. Jesus can and he did, all for us, all for free.

So now Paul makes an argument from the greater to the lesser, **“³²Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?”** In other words, if God did the hard thing—saving every human being throughout all of history from sin, death, and Hell, what won’t he be willing to do for us? What could be too much for him to give us?

I can only speak for myself, but I think most if not all of you will say the same thing about yourselves: I have been blessed far more than I could ever deserve or imagine. I have a wife who has tolerated my presence for almost three decades. I have four children. My cars might not be the newest things in the lot, but they're paid off! I look at my guitars whose quality is far greater than my ability to play them. God has not been content to give me what I need, but has blessed me with so much more.

That's before we even talk about the greater, spiritual gifts that God has given to us. The wonderful gift of the Christ-child on Christmas would do us no good if we didn't know anything about him. So the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to write about Christmas from Joseph's perspective and Luke to write about Christmas from Mary's perspective. In the Gospel lesson for today John doesn't specifically mention Christmas, but he beautifully tells us what Jesus' birth was going to mean for all of us.

God gave us Holy Baptism so that even infants can be made members of his kingdom. Baptism stands as proof for us every day that God has claimed us as his own. We can even receive our Savior's true body and blood in Holy Communion, something that we will be celebrating in just a few minutes. He has given us a beautiful place of worship where we can offer our praise and hear him speak to us in his Word.

As if somehow all of this wasn't enough, he gave me the privilege of serving him in the pastoral ministry. That doesn't mean that all of you have been left out. He wants all of his people to be his witnesses. Sadly the Christmas season has become very stressful for people followed by an even more stressful month when the credit card bill comes do. That's because they don't know what Christmas means. God sends you to tell them.

This text gives us Christmas Confidence. God is for us and God gives the best gifts. Romans 8. When you get a quiet moment, read through the whole thing. Dog-ear it in your Bible so you can get back to it quickly. Does it speak directly about Christmas? No, but it shows God's planning before Christmas and all the blessings he has in store for us for this life and eternity because of it.