

If only we could more fully realize the degree to which these verses are true for us. We'd walk around without a care in the world and people would think we're bonkers. Let's pray for a little earthly off-our-rocker-ness, then. Let's pray for an otherworldly knowledge of just how true the things this section of Romans says are ours really are. Not that life's problems or pains from the myriad effects of sin would disappear, we just wouldn't be affected by them in same way because we'd be that much more mindful of what God's love means for us every second of every day. To grow us up into such knowledge, we're led through a series of questions to help us see all the awesome things that are ours in Christ.

The first question is, *"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (**Romans 8:31**) No matter what the thing is that seems to set itself against you, person or force, well, they can sure try. God is for you! God does things on your behalf. We say that often and so quickly, but do we always realize what we're saying? The Almighty who creates, forgives, and gives life is for us! Is there another Almighty? Does anyone or anything compare to him? Not even close. To reinforce that, Paul refers to those potentially against us things as "who." To not even assign them specific names but impersonally lump them together strips them of their power to harm and oppress because what power do they have in comparison to the Almighty?

Now, an even more important question: how do we know that God is for us to rebuff all threats? Because of this, *"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?"* (**Romans 8:32**) God didn't spare his own Son for you! I'm not gonna give up one of my kids for you to get you out of a bind. I'm not gonna do that because I'm not God. But, to our perpetual relief, God is God and acts in a way

that's beyond us. His love for sinners, his desire to save them spares literally no expense. The wages of sin is death, but God, because he's gracious and desires your salvation as much as he does, put our sin in his sinless Son and gave him up to die in our place so we'd be spared the ultimate consequence of our sin. When you think about that, you can't not be struck with how baffling and overwhelming God's love is! He gave his Son for you! The life of God was given so you'd be saved and live forever. If God did this, what's \$20 for someone in need, you know? God sacrificed God for you, rest assured he'll take care of you in all the other ways too.

God cares for our consciences also. *“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.” (Romans 8:33)* These same forces try to attack with the lie that the Son didn't remove all sin or that one of them was too nasty to be taken away, so no life in heaven. Who says that though? Certainly no one who can hold a candle to the Almighty God. God chooses you. Since that's the case, what can anybody say against his choice? He has all the authority! Besides, God beats the accuser to the punch. God knows every sin you've done better than anyone else, devil included, and he's already made you righteous. So when Satan shows up and says, “Ah, but you did this! No heaven for you!” God shrugs it off, “I know about that already. I forgave it for my Son's sake. This child of mine is righteous, so I have declared it.” The line of thought continues, *“Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” (Romans 8:34)* It's pointless to bring charges against those whom God's chosen because Jesus, the Savior, decides the case. Jesus, the one who died when God offered him to save you. Jesus, the one who was raised when the payment of his life was received and declared completely satisfactory. Jesus, who is at the right hand of God having ascended to that position of power to rule God's kingdom for your sake. Jesus, who now continually intercedes for us to

God the Father. With Jesus as our judge and defense, any case against us is thrown out long before we ever have to worry about it.

Through these questions, the case has been clearly made that God's love is ours for the sake of Christ and because of that, all the other blessings God has to give are ours as well. Paul's not done though. He leads us through the following thought exercise by asking, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*" (**Romans 8:35**) The short answer to the first question is, "no one and nothing," but to show us how true it is, some things people often worry might cut them off from Christ and his love are addressed. Will distress or stressful circumstances? No way. Persecution because faith? Even if your religious freedoms do come under attack, what's it matter? Scripture doesn't give any earthly entity the authority to set the terms on what sets you free where your faith is concerned. Jesus does that. He, the Almighty Son of the Almighty, has set you free by dying, rising, ruling, and interceding for you. You are free because you are forgiven and made righteous no matter what happens in society. Shall anything that might put your body in peril separate you from Jesus' love? Nope.

This is absolutely true, but it doesn't mean that constant pressure from life will always be easy to deal with. We get fatigued. We develop a martyr complex. We get frustrated at God for putting things in our lives we see as problems, bad things, when God's design for them discipline, to make us stronger. God forgives. God continues to insure that in these things, we are more than conquerors through the one who loves us, through Jesus. If only we were more mindful of the reality that even before these things attempt to attack or harm, they are already defeated by Christ who uses his power for our benefit, we'd all be so much better off! So let's pray for that confident knowledge

Let's pray for this conviction, "*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" **(Romans 8:38, 39)** What is ours in Christ? The guarantee of faith that nothing in all creation, no force, no person, can come even remotely close to being able to separate you from the love of God that is yours in Jesus. Jesus delivers us God's love, of course he did, he's love incarnate. Jesus did what the Father sent him to do: die, rise, rule, and intercede. Because Jesus did this, when he, the Lord with all authority, says the love of God is ours, it is and no one can contradict. When he says we're taken care of by God, we are. When he says we're free from accusation because we're free from sin, no one can object. This certainty of faith, this confidence, is ours in Christ. Amen.