

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ROMANS

Living Under Grace (Romans 5-8)

ix. Christian Security

Romans 8:31-39

Prior to chapter eight, Paul mentions the Holy Spirit only four times. However, now he more than makes up for the absence. He speaks of the Spirit no less than twenty times in chapter eight. His concern is not so much who the Spirit is i.e. his person, rather what the Spirit does. And what the Spirit does is to impart the life and hope of God that have been the key themes since chapter five.

This section of chapter eight may be divided into two parts viz.

i. *The work of God for us in Christ* (vv31-34)

“What shall we say in response to this...” [all these things in the original], refers to the many reasons for our confidence that Paul has rehearsed in chapter 5-8. Limiting our observation to chapter 8 alone he reminds us of:

- The provision of new life vv1-13
- The promise of adoption vv14-17
- The prospect of glory vv18-30

All these reasons can be summed up in one statement, “God is for us” (v31a). Paul wants us to internalize the truths he has been teaching. He wants to move us to a new level of confidence in God’s provision for us. He wants us to celebrate our security in Christ.

Of course Paul is a realist. In posing the question “who can be against us?” (v31b), he knows full well that many people and things still oppose us. Young graduates battle to find work in the present economy. State capture and corruption is rampant. Closer to home marriages disintegrate amidst mutual recrimination. Loved ones suffer debilitating illnesses. And on a spiritual level, people even from one’s own family, oppose the gospel. Satan himself is diabolically opposed to faith. Indeed Heiko Oberman’s biography of Martin Luther is subtitled ‘The Man between God and the Devil’.

However, Paul’s point is that with God on our side, none of this opposition will ultimately prevail. In the words of Martin Luther, ‘The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, For lo! His doom is sure, One little word shall fell him.’ Paul reinforces this point in v32 “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all”. If God has done that for us... “how will he not give us all things.”, including our ‘final glory’ and all that he provides to ensure that we reach that glory.

The metaphor Paul uses to underscore our security is a legal one, from a court of law. His series of rhetorical questions begins with “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen” (v33). Satan will certainly do so. But he will not succeed, because God has pronounced us innocent and his verdict can never be revoked or reversed. Verse 34 provides more compelling evidence: Christ has died for us and been raised to life to be our intercessor before the Father. In the words of Douglas Moo, ‘with such a defence attorney, it is no wonder the prosecution loses its case!’ Knowing that we are declared innocent of all charges is a wonderful assurance. But there is still more!

ii. *The Love of God for us in Christ* (vv35-39)

Christ not only defends us, he loves us and by his Spirit indwells us, and nothing will separate us from that love (vv35,36). Paul speaks from his own experience. Despite flogging,

imprisonment and opposition from within and without the church, Paul bookends chapter eight with "no condemnation" (v1) and "no separation" (v39). "No in all these things (cfv31) we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (v37). This is no trite triumphalism or shallow sentimentalism rather the tried and tested testimony of an apostle on the frontline of spiritual battle.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Who indeed? My persecutors? My unbelieving family members? Satan himself? In the words of an unknown author, "Those who follow their Messiah into the valley of the shadow of death will find that they need fear no evil. Though they sometimes seem sheep for the slaughter, yet they may trust the Shepherd, whose love will follow them all the days of their life".

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