

Evergreen Presbyterian Church

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June 14, 2026

Sermon Title: Who Can Be Against Us?

Sermon Text: Romans 8:31-34

Rom. 8:31 ¶ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rom. 8:32 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?

Rom. 8:33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Rom. 8:34 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.

Main Point: The believer's security rests entirely on the objective, God-centered reality of Christ's finished work, which effectively silences every possible accusation from the world, the devil, or even our own hearts.

Outline:

1. The Sufficiency of our God
2. The Insufficiency of Human Fear
3. The Sufficiency of Christ

Introduction

We are coming to the end of a significant section of Romans that has been very focused on the Gospel and what it means for those who place their faith in Jesus

Christ. And Paul has said, due to God's determination to save us even before we were born, and to see us all the way through beyond our death and into glory, our whole life in Christ is secure and safe from before the cradle to beyond the grave.

And now we come to today's passage which is the concluding section Romans 8, where Paul is summarizing this agenda, working like a Pastor should, to show God's people that they have nothing to fear, that they have a God they can trust, and that he is powerful and competent and loving, and that he never changes on us, never gives up on us, and never stops loving us all the way to the end.

As I was reading some historical sources and views on this passage, I came across an incredible statement by the ancient heretic Pelagius. And just as a reminder, Pelagius so emphasized human ability and responsibility and freedom of the will that in his debates with Augustine, he ended up rejecting the need for the grace of God to change our hearts in order to come to Christ. For Pelagius, the death of Christ is an *example* for us, but we ourselves can merit salvation by good works and a life of dedication.

And in light of this, I want you to hear what Pelagius said about what Paul is doing in this passage. It is one of the great examples of completely hearing the opposite point of the Apostle:

“Paul wants to show that nobody can keep those who love God and who are loved by God from attaining the glory which has been promised, because the perfect love which is in them casts out every reason for mortal fear.”
(Pelagius, *Romans*, PCR 113).

Somehow Pelagius entirely flips the passage and sees this as a passage that is not about God and his unbreakable bond of love for believers, but a passage about *us* and how if we really love God, we will drive fear from our own hearts. If we will only love... if we will only keep ourselves near to God... then we have hope. So Pelagius somehow takes a passage about the amazing grace of God and instead makes it all about us!

Pelagius commits to an incredible exercise in completely inverting the truth. Because Paul is in the business of eliminating fears, not creating new ones! And

Paul's answers that he gives are totally centered in God, in His love, and in what *He* is like, not in what we're like.

Paul begins with those words, "What then shall we say to these things?"

"Now that we've seen our sinfulness... now that we've seen our need for a savior... now that we've seen how God has kept all his promises in sending Christ... now that we've seen that He has given us everything we could ever need in his son... Now that we've seen that he justifies the ungodly apart from works...what is left to say?"

That's what Paul wants to know.

And so we come now to our deepest need, which is no longer a matter of the mind... of our knowledge. We have the whole truth. We've seen it all laid out for us very carefully by Paul up to this point.

But our need is even more simple: to have our hearts align with our mind and what we know. We need to treasure and love and believe what we've seen so far. What shall we say? What more is left to say? What more could Paul teach us to add to what we need most of all? And the answer is, from the perspective of the weight of the gospel, there's nothing more.

But Paul keeps talking. He keeps going. And you need to know, that Paul doesn't waste words. And the Holy Spirit who inspired this letter for our good doesn't waste words.

What he is doing now is a work of the heart, not merely of the mind. It's one thing to know, it's another to believe. It's one thing to understand. It's another thing to live on these words and stake everything on the truth.

And so Paul jumps from what we know is true... to what we also know is NOT true. He's taught positively, and now he teaches defensively. He's defending us against our own worst and darkest fears.

What if... what if there's something that can? What if there's something that can separate us? What if there is something... either in us, or in the world, or in the heavens, or in God himself that we haven't considered, that if we only knew it, we'd stop with all this confidence and hope talk once and for all?

I do have this tendency—and perhaps you do as well—to get something good and wonder what the catch is. When does the other shoe drop? And instead of being dismissive Paul says, “I’m going to show you that there’s no catch. I’m going to show you that when it comes to our God, there is no other shoe to drop.”

And so Paul says, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

And we’re going to see over the next three sermons in this series that Paul does this... by combing the entire cosmos trying to think of any possible reasons we might entertain for why we should not be confident, why we should not be secure, and why we should actually be afraid. And spoiler alert: he will come up empty on every count.

When he says, “Who can be against us?” he isn’t saying that there is actually no one against Christians. We do still have our enemies as Luther summarized them (the world, the flesh, and the devil) of course. But Paul isn’t saying that the Christian has no enemies. The issue is that the enemies are ultimately of no account in the face of the God who is for us.

Why can’t they touch us? Why shouldn’t we fear? I’ll mention three reasons from the first four verses, and then (God-willing) we’ll keep following Paul’s thinking in the next message in two weeks.

1. The Sufficiency of our God

First, Paul shows that we have nothing to fear by clinging to the sufficiency of our God.

You see in verse 31 how he asks this rhetorical question: “If *God* is for us, who can be against us?”

You see, unlike Pelagius Paul draws our eyes *away* from ourselves and toward the creator. So Paul doesn’t say, “Because your love is so great, because you are so great, you have every reason for confidence.” No! The more you know him, the *more* secure you’ll realize you are. So it’s not by focusing more on our self that we feel more secure, it’s by focusing on our God.

And by the way, this is why I do try to encourage all of us to study God, to study theology, to learn the deep things of God. Because God's Spirit has revealed God to us in the Scriptures, which if you knew them you would walk with more boldness and joy than you ever knew possible. But that comes from knowing God.

So when you learn about God's self-existence, his changelessness, his sovereignty, his immensity, his glory... you are meditating upon the God who is *for* us. Your sense of security in Christ will be deeper because of it.

Will will find so many of our fears cast away the better we know our God. So please know that studying theology is not a mere mental exercise or a hobby, it's something that God wants for you so that you can grow in your conviction that you have peace with him in Christ.

Why will we grow in our peace as we know God better? Because Paul's answer to our fears is *profoundly* God-centered. Christian, none of our struggles with faith are exclusively knowledge problems. Our struggles are love problems, faith problems, trust problems...and those go beyond knowledge. But even still, I want you to be convinced of the value of knowing God. Because all of those things at rock bottom are about applying what we know. But to have something to apply, we have to have something that we know.

Each and every day, walk with him, listen to him as he tells you in His word what he is like, what he has done for us, why more and more we can trust him... and we can *keep* trusting him.

He speaks, and we believe, and we grow. That is his design for us. The God who created all things, who depends on us for nothing, and who loves sinners is the same God who in Christ speaks to us and says, "I am *for* you."

Paul begins with the sufficiency of our God.

2. The Insufficiency of Human Fear

Second, consider the insufficiency of human fears. There is nothing in all the universe that is great enough to topple our God or overcome the work of Christ that's so central to all of the reassurances that the gospel gives to us. There's

nothing. Nothing that can overturn any of God and his work. That is objectively true.

But Paul also knows how shaky our faith is. He knows how creatively our fears can creep in and overturn our joy and confidence. We can be blown over by anything. Calvin said the pagan trembles at the rustling of a leaf. But at times, we can tremble at *imagined* things, too.

Paul in a sense says,

“Okay, I’ll bite. Let’s talk about these fears that you might have. What could you possibly have—after everything we’ve seen—to be afraid of? Muster up anything you can imagine. Anything in all the universe. Anything you might possibly be afraid of. You will never find anything that matches up to the God of the universe.”

Now, in the next reading he’s going to mention seven possible things that we might bring as reasons to be afraid beginning in verse 35. For the moment, though, I want to mention the two things Paul suggests as candidates in verse 33 and 34.

He asks, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? Who is to condemn”

This is a “who” question. Who’s it going to come from? Truly: who *could* bring a charge against us? Who could possibly condemn those who are in Christ?

Could God bring a charge against us? Could he condemn us? Is it possible that God would accuse those who are in Christ of sin? Peter Martyr says, “It would make *no sense* that the same one who justifies would also accuse.” So it’s not God. God won’t bring the accusation against us.

Well, what about Satan? He would be the most plausible one to bring an accusation. After all, we know that in Revelation 12:10, Satan is explicitly called “the accuser of the brethren.” He’s called the one who “accuses them day and night before our God.” The history of God’s people is marked by a persistent battle against the “accuser.” We’re told how Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua the High Priest, pointing to his filthy robes as evidence of his unworthiness. He questioned Job’s very heart, dismissing his piety as mere self-interest. This is what Satan does: he accuses. He takes the element of truth and then causes us to ask,

“But what if God isn’t gracious? What if he’s lying? What if God really *does* deal with us according to our sins after all?”

Luther was fond of speaking of Satan as the accuser. He frequently talked about the accusations Satan would send his way. He had some creative ways of dealing with Satan that I won’t mention here.

But Luther did teach that when Satan brings a list of sins to your conscience, you should agree with him when they are truthful and accurate. But Luther’s advice was to say: "I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ." So to Luther, Satan is a tyrant whose mouth is stopped only by the intercession of Christ.

Or what about ourselves? Could *we* be the one to bring a charge against ourselves? 1 John 3:20 gives us the answer: “whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything” (1 John 3:20). Calvin was fond of saying that we aren’t always a very good judge of the state of our own hearts. And what he said was that our hearts are often "narrow" and easily overwhelmed by a sense of our own guilt.

So what can happen is, we see our sin through a magnifying glass, but it’s like we’re seeing God’s mercy through a foggy window. So what do you do when that happens? Calvin says, If the "lower court" of your own heart brings a conviction, you appeal to the "Supreme Court" of God’s grace.

Martin Luther echoed this when he said that in these moments, we have to remember that God’s promise is more "real" than our feelings. If our heart says "I am damned" and God’s Word says "I am forgiven," we have to call our heart a liar and believe God. When the accuser is within us, we have to even call our own heart a liar. Our salvation transcends our *feelings* about our salvation. In the end, God is greater than our hearts, says John.

No one can bring an accusation against God’s elect. Not God. Not any angel. Not Satan. Not even us.

Any accusation brought against the believer in Jesus Christ has to fall silent because Christ, our Advocate, has already secured the final verdict. He himself has born our sins and carried our sorrows.

There is nothing that our human fear could cook up that would be enough to separate us from God's love.

3. The Sufficiency of Christ

Which takes us to our third point this morning. In answer to Paul's question "what shall we say to these things?" Paul's answer is not to say something about us. Instead, his response is to praise the sufficiency of Christ.

Paul camps out here. In fact, if we just think of God in and of himself here, it's not *enough* for Paul. Because Paul fills up our confidence not simply by saying, "God is for us," but by telling us in what *sense* he's for us, and what he has *done* because he is for us.

One of the great fears that some Christians can carry with them is the fear that even though I believe in him now, maybe there's coming a day when he will turn his back on me ("He loves me; He loves me not"). But in addition to all our enemies, we have no room to wonder if perhaps God *himself* is the weakest link... as though He might himself turn on us. Why not?

Well Paul's answer is to drive us to Jesus Christ.

Think of what Paul mentions here in only a few words. Why should you *not* be afraid?

Well, Paul says, Christ was put to death for us! That horrible penalty for our sin was placed upon the lamb who was slain in our place. There is no double jeopardy in the gospel. God is just. He does not punish the same sin twice. He does not punish Christ, and then turn to you and do the same. Never. Jesus Christ has been put to death for you. So on what ground are you still fearful, Christian, that maybe he might make an exception for you? There are no such grounds.

Not only was he put to death for us, says Paul, but he was raised up! If Jesus had *remained* in the grave, perhaps our fears would be justified. We would still be in our sins and without hope, and more pitiable than anyone else in all the world. But God vindicated his son, raised him up, and now the empty tomb is proof that your redemption is complete, and no one can accuse or condemn you.

Not only was he raised up, but Paul says that Christ sits in a place of authority at God's right hand! Jesus Christ sits in session at the Father's right hand. He is not pacing heaven, nervously wondering if you will make it or not. He is seated. He is in the highest seat of power in all the universe. And so the one who loves you is the one who rules. And the one who rules is the one whom your life is hidden in.

Not only does he sit at God's right hand, but he intercedes for us! Even now at this moment, the Scriptures say that Jesus speaks your name before the Father. He is not a silent spectator. He is your advocate pleading your case. When you feel too weak or burdened by your own failures... he represents you perfectly. And he doesn't make the case based on you and your deeds. He points to his own wounds... his scars... behold his hands and feet. What he is doing is pleading your case by *being* your case. The Father can no more condemn you than he can condemn his very own precious son.

And then we come to Paul's great inference from this: if he gave up his son, are there *any* of his great and glorious blessings that he would ever withhold from us? It's not just that Christ in *himself* is sufficient to save. But really, Paul's point is that if *God* himself is willing to give up his own son for us, there's nothing in heaven or earth that he won't give for our sake.

What Paul is doing is, he's making an argument from the greater to the lesser. You never have to wonder how committed God is to your peace, because the answer comes back a resounding "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?". That's the resounding answer.

Christ's death preaches a sermon about God's commitment to you. You never have to wonder, "Is he holding back? Is he expecting me to contribute something? Is he angry that I fall so short still? Is there something I lack?" Because the answer is found on the head that was crowned with thorns. In the hands that were pierced. In the feet that were torn by the nails. In the side that was stabbed through.

And the answer is, "The Father will give even his own precious son for your sake. He'll give anything. He has withheld nothing."

Now listen: so far we have seen incredible reassurances and promises. But there's something else you need to hear.

If you've never come to Christ, I cannot emphasize this enough: what you have heard here will not be good news for you as long as you remain outside of Christ. Apart from faith in Jesus Christ, you will never know these blessings. In fact, if Christ remains distant from you... if you refuse to place your faith in him... if you resist his grace, then instead of these assurances the Scriptures promise you will receive what your sins deserve. Instead of grace in Christ, you will experience justice for your sins.

And that means the opposite of everything Paul has said. It means condemnation, destruction, and separation from God, which is truly the most horrible fate in all the universe, because we were made for Him.

And even if you believe, please know that this warning is also true for your unbelieving friends, neighbors, family... strangers in far off places who don't know Jesus Christ. How can we possibly keep this news to ourselves when God has given us this gospel to share?

The reason he has given these things to us here is that Paul doesn't want those curses for us or anyone else. His heart was in agony when he thought of those living life apart from Christ. He even will say in just a few verses that he would rather be cursed himself rather than see anyone come into condemnation.

So when we talk about death and hell, you should know we do not hold these things out gleefully or gladly. Instead, we do so with tears. It is a horrible thought, to think of any sinner receiving what sin truly deserves.

This is why God has given us the gospel. That we might be reconciled to God, and receive peace through Jesus Christ. And so I would plead with you today, if you are not trusting in Jesus Christ, turn to him today, confess your sin, trust in Jesus Christ, and know the security of Jesus Christ in which he will never let you go.

Conclusion

Now, for the moment, Paul is inviting those who are in Christ to something infinitely precious: to live rejoicing in the fact that God is “for us.” Believer, we’re not done considering the possible reasons we might have to be afraid. We’ll continue this in two weeks. But for today, let me encourage you: if he gave up his own son for you... is there anything he would withhold? Any good thing that he would keep back? Any way at all that you could accuse him of having a restrained love? Never.

Let's pray.