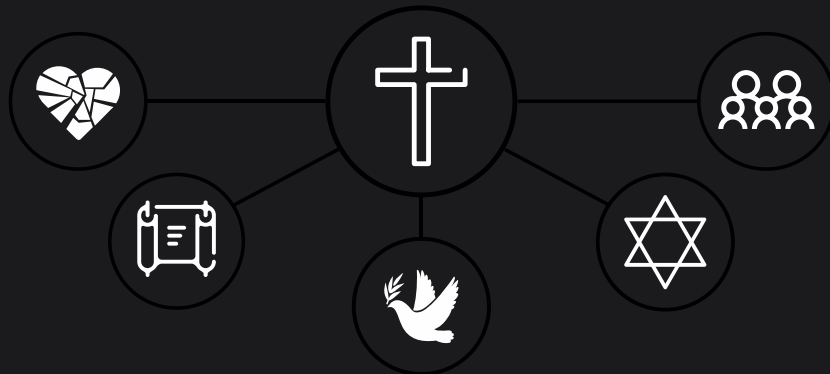




ROMANS AND THE FUTURE GOSPEL

ROMANS 1-7



Title: Romans and the Future Gospel

Text: Romans 8:31-39

Date: April 9, 2023

Main Idea: Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Personal Study Guide

READ ROMANS 8 IN ITS ENTIRETY; THEN GO BACK AND READ ROMANS 8:31-39

Highlight – What stands out?

Let's review all of Romans 8 up to this point.

Text	Key Themes/Ideas
Romans 8:1-8	
Romans 8:9-11	
Romans 8:12-17	
Romans 8:18-27	
Romans 8:28-30	

1. Romans 8:31 says "What then shall we say to these things"? Based on the table above, what are "these things"?
2. Verses 31-35 asks a lot of rhetorical questions. Rephrase those questions into statements. For example:
 - "If God is for us, who can be against us?" rephrased "Since God is for us, no one can be against us" (verse 31).
3. Based on these questions/statements, what phrases or statements does Paul use to prove his answers to these questions? What emphatic words or phrases does he use?

Explain – What does this mean?

1. Paul begins Romans 8 with what verse and phrase? Then he spends the rest of the chapter unpacking what this looks like. How does the rest of Romans 8 prove that we are no longer under condemnation?

Paul gives a lot of assurances to prove that God is for us. Let's look up some other verses that prove the truth of Romans 8:31-39

Verse	Verse	Truth of Assurance
Romans 8:31	Psalms 118	
Romans 8:32	John 17	
Romans 8:33	Luke 23:32-42	
Romans 8:34	Hebrews 7:25-28	
Romans 8:35	John 10	

2. Verses 37-39 speak of the love of God or the "love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Look up the following verses and explain how we know God loves us:
 - Galatians 2:20
 - Ephesians 5:2
 - Revelation 1:5

Apply – How does this change me?

1. Think back to Romans 8:17-30. How is Romans 8:31-39 a comfort after reading Romans 8:17-30?

2. "How do I know God is for me?" is the constant question in our minds as we read Romans 8, especially after reading Romans 7. What verses or words assure you that God is for you?
3. Is there something in your life that makes you feel like you are separated from the love of Christ? Is there anything listed in Romans 8:31-39 (sin, suffering, persecution, etc.) that makes you feel separated from him? How do Paul's words in verses 38-39 speak to your situation?

Respond – What's my next step?

1. If someone said: "I can't believe God is for me because I've sinned too much," how would you answer them based on Paul's words?
2. If someone said: "I can't believe that God is for me because my suffering is too great and has no purpose," how would you answer them based on Paul's words?

Read the lyrics to these 2 songs. How do the words fit within the context of Romans 8:31-39?

[Jesus Paid it All](#)

I hear the savior say
Thy strength indeed is small
Child of weakness watch and pray
Find in me thine all in all

Jesus paid it all
All to him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow

Lord, now indeed I find
Thy power and thine alone
Came and changed the lepers spots
And it melt the heart of stone

Jesus paid it all
All to him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow

And when before the throne
I stand in him complete
Jesus died my soul to save
My lips shall still repeat

Jesus paid it all
All to him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow

[Love Still Bids You Welcome](#)

By Keith and Kristyn Getty and Skye Peterson

Oh, God of grace, how often have I grieve Thee?
How seldom have I sung Thy praise?
And little do I know, how much I need Thee
And time again I turn away
For how my heart is hard and unbelieving
For all I've done and left undone
Your love is not reluctant to receive me
My soul draws back, but Love says, "Come"

Oh, He will not cast you out, He will not cast you out
Whoever enters in will forever dwell with Him
Draw near, faint heart, draw near
Oh, Love still bids you welcome here

Oh, Father when I sin against my neighbor
I turn away your very Son
Who died to call us friends when we were strangers
And says to every sinner, "Come"

Oh, He will not cast you out, He will not cast you out
Whoever enters in will forever dwell with Him
Draw near, faint heart, draw near
Oh, Love still bids you welcome here

Oh, Lord of light, you call out us out of darkness
To turn aside from sin and live
And prodigals, we come to you for pardon
Oh, Abba Father, take us in
He will not cast you out, He will not cast you out
Whoever enters in will forever dwell with Him
Oh, He will not cast you out, He will not cast you out
Whoever enters in will forever dwell with Him
Draw near, faint heart, draw near
Oh, Love still bids you welcome here

Commentary: Taken from John Stott's commentary on Romans 8:31-39

Note to Group Leaders: You also have your F.F. Bruce Commentary on Romans you were given on Team Night. You can use that one, in addition to this one, to help you grasp the text. Reach out to Courtney Reissig if you need one or haven't received yours.

*****Group Leaders: It might be helpful to use his five convictions and affirmations as a springboard for discussion if you want to go in that direction.**

c. Five unanswerable questions (31–39)

Paul introduces the last nine verses of this chapter with a concluding formula, which he has already used three times (6:1, 15; 7:7): *What, then, shall we say in response to this?* (31a). That is, in the light of his five convictions (28) and five affirmations (29–30), 'what is there left to say?' (JBP), or 'what can we add?' (JB). The apostle's answer to his own question is to ask five more questions, to which there is no answer. He hurls them into space, as it were, in a spirit of bold defiance. He challenges anybody and everybody, in heaven, earth or hell, to answer them and to deny the truth which they contain. But there is no answer. For no-one and nothing can harm the people whom God has foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified.

If we are to understand the significance of these questions, it is essential to grasp why each remains unanswered. It is because of a truth which in each case is either contained in the question, or is attached to it by an 'if' clause. It is this truth, whether explicit or implicit, which renders the question unanswerable. The clearest example is the first.

Question 1: If God is for us, who can be against us? (31b).

If Paul had simply asked, 'Who is against us?' there would immediately have been a barrage of replies. For we have formidable foes arrayed against us. What about the

JBP *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J. B. Phillips (Collins, 1958).

JB The Jerusalem Bible (1966).

catalogue of hardships which he lists in verse 35; are they not against us? The unbelieving, persecuting world is opposed to us.¹⁷³ Indwelling sin is a powerful adversary. Death is still an enemy, defeated but not yet destroyed. So is he 'who holds the power of death, that is, the devil',¹⁷⁴ together with all the principalities and powers of darkness which are mentioned in verse 38.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the world, the flesh and the devil are together marshalled against us, and are much too strong for us. 'Sometimes under calamity the whole universe seems to be against us.'¹⁷⁶

But Paul does not ask this naïve question. The essence of his question is contained in the 'if' clause: 'If [rather, 'since'] God is for us, who can be against us?' Paul is not saying that the claim 'God is for us' can be made by everybody. In fact, perhaps the most terrible words which human ears could ever hear are those which God uttered many times in the Old Testament: "I am against you," declares the LORD.' They occur most frequently in the prophetic oracles against the nations, for example, against Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Tyre and Sidon, and Edom.¹⁷⁷ More terrible still, they were sometimes spoken against Israel herself in her disobedience and idolatry,¹⁷⁸ and specially against her false shepherds and false prophets.¹⁷⁹

But this is not the case in Romans 8:31. On the contrary, the situation Paul envisages is one in which 'God is for us', since he has foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified us. This being so, who can be against us? To that question there is no answer. All the powers of hell may set themselves together against us. But they can never prevail, since God is on our side.

Question 2: 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? (32).

Again, suppose the apostle had asked the simple question: 'Will God not graciously give us all things?' In response, we might well have demurred and given an equivocal answer. For we need many things, some of which are difficult and demanding. How then can we possibly be sure that God will supply all our needs?

But the way Paul phrases his question banishes these doubts. For he points us to the cross. The God concerning whom we are asking our question whether or not he will give us all things is the God who has already given us his Son. On the one hand, and negatively, he *did not spare his own Son*, a statement which surely echoes God's word to Abraham: 'You ... have not withheld [LXX 'spared', as in Rom. 8:32] your son, your only son.'¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, and positively, God *gave him up for us all*. The same verb is used in the gospels of Judas, the priests and Pilate who 'handed Jesus over' to death. Yet Octavius Winslow was correct to write: 'Who delivered up Jesus to

¹⁷³ Cf. 1 Cor. 16:9: 'there are many who oppose me'.

¹⁷⁴ 1 Cor. 15:26; Heb. 2:14.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Eph. 6:12.

¹⁷⁶ Dodd, p. 146.

¹⁷⁷ Assyria and its capital Nineveh (Na. 2:13; 3:5); Babylon (Je. 50:31; 51:25); Egypt (Ezk. 29:3, 10; 30:22); Tyre and Sidon (Ezk. 26:3; 28:22) and Edom (Ezk. 35:1ff.).

¹⁷⁸ E.g. Lv. 26:17; Ezk. 5:8; 14:8; 15:7; 21:3.

¹⁷⁹ E.g. Ezk. 13:8f., 20; 14:9; 34:10.

LXX The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint, third century BC.

¹⁸⁰ Gn. 22:16.

die? Not Judas, for money; not Pilate, for fear; not the Jews, for envy;—but the Father, for love!¹⁸¹

Here in 8:32, as earlier in 5:8–10, Paul argues from the greater to the lesser, namely that since God has already given us the supreme and costliest gift of his own Son, ‘how can he fail to lavish every other gift upon us?’ (REB). In giving his Son he gave everything. The cross is the guarantee of the continuing, unfailing generosity of God.

Question 3: Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies (33).

This question and the next (asking who will accuse us and who will condemn us) bring us in imagination into a court of law. Paul’s argument is that no prosecution can succeed, since God our judge has already justified us; and that we can never be condemned, since Jesus Christ our advocate has died for our sins, was raised from the dead, is seated at God’s right hand, and is interceding for us.

So who will accuse us? Once again, if this question stood on its own, many voices would be raised in accusation. Our conscience accuses us. The devil never ceases to press charges against us, for his title *diabolos* means ‘slanderer’ or ‘calumniator’, and he is called ‘the accuser of the brothers’.¹⁸² In addition, we doubtless have human enemies who delight to point an accusing finger at us. But none of their allegations can be sustained. Why not? Because God has chosen us (we are ‘God’s elect’, RSV) and because God has justified us. Therefore all accusations fall to the ground. They glance off us like arrows off a shield. The apostle is surely echoing the words of the Servant in Isaiah 50:8–9:

He who vindicates me is near.
Who then will bring charges against me?
Let us face each other!
Who is my accuser?
Let him confront me!
It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me.
Who is he who will condemn me?

Question 4: Who is he that condemns? 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 (34).

In answer to the opening question as to who will condemn us, there are without doubt many who are wanting to. Sometimes our own ‘heart’ condemns us.¹⁸³ It certainly tries to. And so do our critics, our detractors, our enemies, yes, and all the demons of hell.

But their condemnations will all fail. Why? Because of Christ Jesus. Commentators differ as to whether the next clauses are questions (RSV, ‘Is it Christ Jesus who died ...?’) or assertions (‘It is Christ Jesus who died ...’), or denials (REB, ‘Not Christ, who died ...!’).

¹⁸¹ Quoted from John Murray, *No Condemnation in Christ Jesus* (1857), p. 324.

REB The Revised English Bible (1989).

¹⁸² Rev. 12:10; cf. Zc. 3:1.

RSV The Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NT, 1946; second edition, 1971; OT, 1952).

¹⁸³ 1 Jn. 3:20f.

RSV The Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NT, 1946; second edition, 1971; OT, 1952).

REB The Revised English Bible (1989).

But in every case the sense is the same, namely that Christ rescues us from condemnation, in particular by his death, resurrection, exaltation and intercession.

First, *Christ Jesus ... died*—died for the very sins for which otherwise we would deservedly be condemned. But instead God ‘condemned sin’ (our sin) in the humanity of Jesus (8:3), and so Christ has redeemed us from the curse or condemnation of the law ‘by becoming a curse for us’.¹⁸⁴ There is *more than that*, however, in the saving work of Christ. For secondly, after death he *was raised to life*. It is not just that he rose, although this is affirmed in the New Testament, but that he was raised by the Father, who thus demonstrated his acceptance of the sacrifice of his Son as the only satisfactory basis for our justification (4:25).¹⁸⁵ And now, thirdly, the crucified and resurrected Christ *is at the right hand of God*, resting from his finished work,¹⁸⁶ occupying the place of supreme honour,¹⁸⁷ exercising his authority to save,¹⁸⁸ and waiting for his final triumph.¹⁸⁹ Fourthly, he *is also interceding for us*, for he is our heavenly advocate¹⁹⁰ and high priest.¹⁹¹ His very presence at the Father’s right hand is evidence of his completed work of atonement, and his intercession means that he ‘continues ... to secure for his people the benefits of his death’.¹⁹² With this Christ as our Saviour (who died, was raised, has been exalted and is interceding), we know that ‘there is now no condemnation’ for those who are united to him (8:1). We can therefore confidently challenge the universe, with all its inhabitants human and demonic: *Who is he that condemns?* There will never be any answer.

Question 5: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (35a).

‘We are climbing a grand staircase here,’¹⁹³ and this fifth question is the top step. As we stand on it, Paul himself now does what we have been trying to do with his other questions. He first asks who will separate us from Christ’s love and then looks round for an answer. He brings forward a sample list of adversities and adversaries that might be thought of as coming between us and Christ’s love. He mentions seven possibilities (35b). He begins with *trouble (thlipsis)*, *hardship (stenochōria)* and *persecution (diōgmos)*, which together seem to denote the pressures and distresses caused by an ungodly and hostile world. He goes on to *famine or nakedness*, the lack of adequate food and clothing. Since in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus promised these to the heavenly Father’s children,¹⁹⁴ would not their absence suggest that after all he does not care?

Paul concludes his list with *danger or sword*, meaning perhaps the risk of death on the one hand and the experience of it on the other, whether ‘the sword’ be ‘the

¹⁸⁴ Gal. 3:13.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. 1 Cor. 15:14ff.

¹⁸⁶ E.g. Heb. 1:3; 10:11ff.

¹⁸⁷ Phil. 2:9ff.

¹⁸⁸ Acts 2:33; 5:31.

¹⁸⁹ Ps. 110:1.

¹⁹⁰ E.g. 1 Jn. 2:1f.

¹⁹¹ E.g. Heb. 7:23ff.

¹⁹² Hodge, p. 290.

¹⁹³ Lloyd-Jones, vol. 8, p. 425.

¹⁹⁴ Mt. 6:25f.

final sword thrust of bandit or enemy soldier or executioner'.¹⁹⁵ A willingness for martyrdom is certainly the final test of Christian faith and faithfulness. In order to enforce this, the apostle quotes from a psalm, which depicts the persecution of Israel by the nations. They were not suffering because they had forgotten Yahweh or turned to a foreign god. Instead, they were suffering for Yahweh's sake, because of their very loyalty to him:

³⁶*For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.*¹⁹⁶

So what about these seven afflictions—and others too, since the list could be considerably lengthened? They are real sufferings all right—unpleasant, demeaning, painful, hard to bear and challenging to faith. And Paul knew what he was talking about, because he had himself experienced them all, and worse.¹⁹⁷ Perhaps the Roman Christians were also having to endure similar trials. Indeed some of them did a few years later, when they were burned as living torches for the sadistic entertainment of the Emperor Nero. Those of us who have never had to suffer physically for Christ should perhaps read verses 35–39 alongside verses 35–39 of Hebrews 11, which list unnamed people of faith who were tortured, jeered at, flogged, chained, stoned, and even sawn in half. Faced with such heroism, there is no place for glibness or complacency.

Nevertheless, can pain, misery and loss separate Christ's people from his love? *No!* On the contrary, far from alienating us from him, *in all these things* (even while we are enduring them) Paul dares to claim that *we are more than conquerors (hypernikōmen)*. For we not only bear them with fortitude but triumph over them, and so 'are winning a most glorious victory' (BAGD) *through him who loved us* (37). This second reference to Christ's love is significant, and the aorist tense shows that it alludes to the cross. Paul seems to be saying that, since Christ proved his love for us by *his* sufferings, so *our* sufferings cannot possibly separate us from it. In the context, which began with a reference to our sharing Christ's sufferings (17), they 'should be seen as evidence of union with the crucified one, not a cause for doubting his love'.¹⁹⁸

Paul now reaches his climax. He began with *we know* (28); he ends more personally with *I am convinced*. He deliberately uses the perfect tense (*pepeismai*), meaning, 'I have become and I remain convinced', for the conviction he expresses is rational, settled and unalterable. He has asked questions whether anything will separate us from Christ's love (35–36); he now declares that nothing can and so nothing will (37–39). He chooses ten items which some might think powerful enough to create a barrier between us and Christ, and he mentions them in four pairs, while leaving the remaining two on their own. *Neither death nor life* presumably alludes to the crisis of

¹⁹⁵ Dunn, vol. 38A, p. 512.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Ps. 43:22, LXX.

¹⁹⁷ E.g. 2 Cor. 11:23ff.

BAGD Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, second edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker from Bauer's fifth edition, 1958 (University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹⁹⁸ Dunn, vol. 38A, p. 504.

death and the calamities of life. *Neither angels nor demons* is more debatable. *Demons* translates *archai*, which elsewhere are certainly evil principalities.¹⁹⁹ One would therefore expect the contrasting *angels* to be good. But how can unfallen angels threaten God's people? Perhaps, then, this couplet is more indefinite and is simply meant to include all cosmic, superhuman agencies, whether good or bad. Since Christ has triumphed over them all,²⁰⁰ and they are now 'in submission to him',²⁰¹ it is certain that they cannot harm us.

The next two pairs refer in modern language to 'time' (*neither the present nor the future*) and 'space' (*neither height nor depth*), while in between them, on their own, come unspecified *powers*, perhaps 'the forces of the universe' (REB). Some of these words, however, were technical terms for 'the astrological powers by which (as many in the Hellenistic world believed) the destiny of mankind was controlled'.²⁰² Alternatively, Paul's language may have been more rhetorical than technical, as he affirms like Psalm 139:8 that 'neither the highest height nor the deepest depth',²⁰³ neither heaven nor earth nor hell, can separate us from Christ's love. He concludes with *or anything else in all creation*, in order to make sure that his inventory is comprehensive, and that nothing has been left out. Everything in creation is under the control of God the Creator and of Jesus Christ the Lord. That is why nothing *will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (39b).

Paul's five questions are not arbitrary. They are all about the kind of God we believe in. Together they affirm that absolutely nothing can frustrate God's purpose (since he is for us), or quench his generosity (since he has not spared his Son), or accuse or condemn his elect (since he has justified them through Christ), or sunder us from his love (since he has revealed it in Christ).

Here then are five convictions about God's providence (28), five affirmations about his purpose (29, 30) and five questions about his love (31–39), which together bring us fifteen assurances about him. We urgently need them today, since nothing seems stable in our world any longer. Insecurity is written across all human experience. Christian people, are not guaranteed immunity to temptation, tribulation or tragedy, but we are promised victory over them. God's pledge is not that suffering will never afflict us, but that it will never separate us from his love.

This is the love of God which was supremely displayed in the cross (5:8; 8:32, 37), which has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (5:5), which has drawn out from us our responsive love (8:28), and which in its essential steadfastness will never let us go, since it is committed to bringing us safe home to glory in the end (8:35, 39). Our confidence is not in our love for him, which is frail, fickle and faltering, but in his love for us, which is steadfast, faithful and persevering. The doctrine of 'the

¹⁹⁹ *E.g.* Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15.

²⁰⁰ *E.g.* Eph. 1:21f.

²⁰¹ 1 Pet. 3:22.

REB The Revised English Bible (1989).

²⁰² Barrett, p. 174.

²⁰³ Cranfield, vol. I, p. 443.

perseverance of the saints²⁰⁴ needs to be re-named. It is the doctrine of the perseverance of God with the saints.

Let me no more my comfort draw
From my frail hold of thee;
In this alone rejoice with awe—
Thy mighty grasp of me.¹

Additional Resources:

Sermon: [Conquerors Through Him by R. Kent Hughes](#)

Sermon: [Confidence Well Grounded by Dick Lucas](#)

Podcast episode: [Michael Kruger on Romans 8-16](#)

Podcast episode: [If God is For Us by Trillia Newbell](#)

²⁰⁴ One of the most thorough statements and defences of this doctrine is given by D. M. Lloyd-Jones in his exposition of Rom. 8:17–39 entitled *The Final Perseverance of the Saints* (Banner of Truth, 1975). Chapters 16–36 (pp. 195–457) are specifically devoted to this great theme.

¹ John R. W. Stott, [The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World](#), *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 253–260.