

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 5:31-39

Study Notes

Five Fundamental Questions:

Paul's five rhetorical questions: The logical result of the two other sets of statements he has already given us: Five convictions and Five affirmations or assurances.

Paul's introductory phrase: "What then, shall we say?" – a formula he used in Romans 6:1, 15; 7:7.

1. "If God Is For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?" v. 31

If Paul had asked, "Who is against us?", there could have been many answers: humans, spiritual forces, and the myriad of difficulties we find later on in verse 35.

"Who can be against us?" Ephesians 6:12:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Satan as our adversary: John 8:44; John 10:10; 1 John 3:8; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9

Paul's full question: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Another translation: "Since God is for us ... who can prevail against us?"

One of the most daunting sentences in the Old Testament: "I am against you," declares the LORD.' Those words are repeated in the Old Testament prophetic books against Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Tyre and Sidon, and Edom.

Occasionally, God even says those words to Israel and Judah when he warns them about their disobedience, idolatry, and false shepherds and false prophets.

In Romans 8, Paul tells us, “God is for us”. In everything he is working for our good: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification.

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?” – V 32

Paul's format: Larger to smaller: “If God did not spare His own Son, what would he now withhold from us?”

Satan's ploy: Convincing us that God is holding out on us. The Genesis episode: “God knows, in the day you eat that fruit, you will become wise like Him.” – Genesis 3:5

Do we suspect God is holding something back from us?

Framing the question against the background of the Cross. Would God, who sacrificed his highest and best, withhold from us anything that we truly need?

Pointing back to Abraham: “You ... have not withheld your son, your only son.” – Genesis 22:16

Pointing to the Cross: “God gave him – Jesus -- up for us all.”

3. “Who Will Bring Any Charge Against Those Whom God Has Chosen? It Is God Who Justifies.” V. 33

Borrowing language from 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?”

The “Who?” of Paul's argument. The first one: “If God is for us, who can be against us or prevail against us?” This time: “Who can accuse/condemn us?”

If the question was simply, “Who can accuse us?”, the answer could have a variety of answers. See: Acts 22:30; 2 Corinthians 10:1

The thrust of Paul's question here in Romans 8 is this: “Who can condemn us, since God has justified us?” (Compare this to Zechariah 3).

Paul's argument: No prosecution can succeed, since God our judge has already justified us: We can be accused, but never be condemned. Christ,

our Advocate has died for our sins. God raised Him from the dead and seated him at his right hand. And what is He presently doing for us? He is interceding for us.

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.” V. 34

As if to punctuate what he just said, Paul adds this question: “Who is he that condemns?” Four things Paul tells us about Christ:

A. Christ Jesus Died: The emphasis here is that the God-Man died for the very sins that would have been the basis of our condemnation. See: Galatians 3:13 -- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law “by becoming a curse for us”.

B. Christ Jesus was raised to life: This is more than a statement of physical resurrection. 1. Our justification is tied to the Resurrection -- Romans 4:25. 2. The Father’s raising of Jesus is the evidence that He has accepted the Son’s sacrifice for sins.

C. Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God: See: Hebrews 10:11-14

The full scope of Christ’s current ministry: He is resting from his finished work, sitting in the place of supreme honor, exercising his authority to save, and waiting for his final triumph.

D. Christ Jesus Is Interceding For Us:

Jesus is both our Advocate and Heavenly High Priest. He is acting on our behalf, both before the Father and against our adversaries. See: Hebrews 7:25

1. Christ’s intercession will be ultimately be successful in safeguarding our journey from here to God’s presence. 2. Christ’s intercession on our behalf is also a form of spiritual warfare. He thwarts the attacks of our spiritual enemies.

5. “Who Shall Separate Us From The Love Of Christ?” V. 35

The crowning question: “Who shall separate us from the love of God?” The answer: No one will.

Paul’s list of adversaries and adversities in verse 35: Troubles, Hardships, Persecution, Famine, Nakedness, Danger, and Sword.

In some places in Paul's world, most Christians were threatened by such circumstances. All these things put them at risk.

Paul's reference to Psalm 44: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

The record of Hebrews 11: The people of faith who were tortured, jeered at, flogged, chained, stoned, and even sawn in half.

Paul's confidence: No pain, misery, or loss can separate God's people from his love! Just the opposite is true: Instead of alienating us from God, Paul declares we are more than conquerors.

The Apex of "We know": "I have become and remain convinced" that there are then things which cannot create a barrier between us and God."

Pairs of threats that cannot separate us from God's love:

- Human experiences: "Neither death nor life".
- Supernatural entities: "Neither angels nor demons."
- Time: "Neither the present nor the future."
- Geographic space: "Neither height nor depth."
- Final Enemies: "Nor any powers ... Nor anything else in creation."

None of these things can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. None of them have the power to take us away from God's love or God himself. They are powerless against God's will.

Tying it all together:

- Five convictions about God's work in our lives.
- Five affirmations about his purposes for those who love him and are called by him.
- Five rhetorical questions about his love.