



*31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 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. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

It was Friday evening and Stephen McAlpin had just finished up another week as a church planting intern at a church in Cambridge Massachusetts. Stephen was a graduate of Gordon Conwell Seminary and he was looking forward to planting a church in the Los Angeles area. It had been an uneventful week and Stephen and his wife Emily had just finished watching a little TV when they heard the loud fireworks begin. They soon realized it was not fireworks at all, but gunfire that was bursting just outside their home. They were caught in the crossfire of the eventual capture of the suspects in the Boston Marathon bombing. They hid under a table and eventually made their way to the bathtub. It's a good thing too, because several bullets hit their house and one entered into the living room and hit their TV. They laid in the bathtub, holding one another and constantly offering up prayers of protection to God. Listen to how Stephen described their terrifying ordeal.

I believe the peace we experienced came from the Holy Spirit, who was a guiding light to us in a terrifyingly dark time. We experienced the Spirit's peace most fully while praying. It was a kind of peace that felt like someone else was sharing it with us. As I led my wife in prayer there was like a bright light that calmed my thoughts and helped me to feel that life is a gift and that it's all about Jesus. In our hearts we felt calmness and even joy at the idea of us finally being with God together. And physically, it was like God's arms were being wrapped around us to cover us. Altogether, the peace we experienced led us into worship and gave us real hope. It was otherworldly.<sup>1</sup>

In that terrifying moment, Stephen and Emily were living out the promise in verse 35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* I especially appreciated this sentence from Stephen. "In our hearts we felt calmness and even joy at the idea of us finally being with God together." Even if they died in that ordeal, they felt the assurance that not even death could separate them from the love of Christ. Now it's one thing for you and I to hang onto this promise while we are comfortably sitting in church this morning, but it's different when you are staring death in the face, don't you think? But perhaps that's when the Lord will make it most real to us, like what happened to Stephen and Emily.

I believe that this is what Paul intended to happen when he wrote this section of Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He wanted to give his readers--and right now that's you and me--the most powerful assurance. He wanted to overwhelm us with the idea that if God be for us, nothing can stand against us. And as he so often does, he taught by asking a series of questions.

**Q. What then shall we say to these things? (31)**

What the first question that comes to mind about this question? Husbands, let's say that you are having a conversation with your wife and she asks you, "Well, what do you think about that?" For men, you suddenly have this frightening thought, "Wait a minute. What do I think about what? What is she talking about Oh, man, I wasn't listening, was I? I better make something up real fast!" Guys, I have a little trick for you that might get you out of a tough spot or it might make matters worse. If your wife says to you, "What do you think about that" and you realize you weren't listening, you could say, "Well honey, I'd really like to hear what you think about the subject first." Do you see why that's risky? She may have just spent the last ten minutes telling you exactly what she thinks already so you will have just confirmed the fact that you could care less what she thinks. You are dead meat at that point. You're done. You're toast. Or, if you get lucky, you just had a brain freeze for 30 seconds and she started a new topic and she'll be all happy because she thinks you really do want to know what she thinks. But then again, I just gave away our trade secret so don't even attempt this!

That's the way a conversation can go, but in a letter like Romans, you don't have to remember what the other person was talking about. You just have to go back and read what they just wrote. What shall we say about these things? OK, what things? To what is Paul directing our attention. Does he mean just verses 28-30, that great promise that all things will work together for good? He must mean that at the very least. The immediate context would tell us that much. But I think Paul is referring back to all of chapter eight. After all, what is the theme of Romans 8? In a word, the theme is assurance. And it all started with verse one. *There is therefore now no condemnation*

*for those who are in Christ Jesus.* So Paul is driving at utter and complete assurance for the believer. His first question, what then shall we say to these things, is pointing back to all of chapter eight. Some people think it looks back to all of Romans but at the very least, it points back to the beginning of the chapter. Romans eight is considered by some to be the premier chapter in the Bible and Paul is about to cap it off with a hymn of assurance.

### **Q. If God is for us, who can be against us? (31)**



When I think of this verse--who can be against us--I immediately think of all kinds of people and organizations who are against us. Darwinian evolution is against the believer because if we crawled out of the primordial soup, then the entire message of the Bible disintegrates and is carried away like dust in the wind. No one sums up the battle better than Richard Dawkins.

"Before Darwin came along, it was pretty difficult to be an atheist, at least to be an atheist free of nagging doubts. Darwin triumphantly made it

EASY to be an intellectually fulfilled and satisfied atheist. That doesn't mean that understanding Darwin drives you inevitably to atheism. But it certainly constitutes a giant step in that direction."<sup>2</sup> Evolution is clearly "against us."

The ironically named tolerance movement is against us. The tolerance people tolerate anyone who agrees with them but viscerally and aggressively attack anyone who disagrees with them. Elton John weighed in recently on this discussion.

"We live in a different time. If Jesus Christ was alive today, I cannot see him, as the Christian person that he was and the great person that he was, saying this could not happen. He was all about love and compassion and forgiveness and trying to bring people together, and that is what the church should be about."<sup>3</sup>

Not only did Elton John rewrite the Bible and put blasphemous words into the mouth of our Savior, but statements like this put forth a subtle but simple message:

Disagreement = Hate

I don't mean to just pick on gay marriage, but it is probably the issue that is driving the tolerance movement right now. But this is exactly what Elton John wanted to communicate. Jesus was all about love and compassion, so it would have been impossible for him to have disagreed with gay marriage. Disagreement is a form of hatred and since Jesus loved everyone, he couldn't have disagreed. I think people like Elton John actually believe this stuff.

When the Phil Robertson/Duck Dynasty thing blew up last December, Mark Steyn of the National Review summed up the issue this way.

Most Christian opponents of gay marriage oppose gay marriage; they don't oppose the right of gays to advocate it. Yet thug groups like GLAAD increasingly oppose the right of Christians even to argue their corner. It's quicker and more effective to silence them.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, the tolerance movement is "against us."

But the list of people who are against us doesn't stop there. Radical Muslims are against us. Emily Fuentes, communications director at Open Doors USA, described the growing crisis.

The target of violence is mainly taking place from rebel groups who are Islamic extremists, so these are jihadists practicing extreme Islam and are targeting Christian areas. Many of these Christians have had to flee, and these towns have essentially become ghost towns because they've cleared Christians out. In October of last year, there was a massacre in one of these towns where more than 45 people died and hundreds were injured just because it was a Christian-dominated town.<sup>5</sup>

In January, Open Doors published a list of the top 50 countries where persecution against Christians was the worst. North Korea has topped the list for the past twelve consecutive years.

- 1) North Korea
- 2) Somalia
- 3) Syria
- 4) Iraq
- 5) Afghanistan<sup>6</sup>

Two years ago, Iraq was number nine on this list<sup>7</sup> and has now moved up to the number four spot, so things are getting worse, not better in the country that we "liberated."<sup>8</sup>

Now let's make sure we clearly distinguish between radical Muslims and the Muslim down the street. Now I don't buy into the piece of propaganda that says that Islam is a "religion of peace." A plain reading of the Koran will not support such a platform as this. Muslim Jihadists get their inspiration and motivation from their holy book and from the clerics within their own ranks. Islam, as a religion, is not and has not been a religion of peace.

However, please do not paint all Muslims alike as they tend to do to us. Muslims throughout the world view Western Christians almost exclusively through the eyes of Western media. They think that since America is a "Christian nation," that every American is a Christian. If you watch our TV shows and movies, you will think that Christians are incredibly immoral people.

We have friends who have served in Amman, Jordan for over twenty years, so they know the Muslim culture very well. Here is a portion of a description she sent to me.

One example of them believing media depictions comes from our early days in Jordan, when I was saying that I am a Christian and I am from California. One woman said "Oh, I know all about you then! I watch Baywatch."

In the same way that they judge us and lump us all together, we tend to judge all Muslims by the most radical Muslims. All Muslims need Christ, including the most radical, Christian-hating, head-chopping Muslims. Let's be careful to pray for them and reach out to them when the opportunity arises. While we need to carefully distinguish between radical and typical Muslims, there is no question that radical Muslims are "against us."

Who else is against us? Even though the First Amendment grants us freedom of religion and freedom of speech, we are well aware that these rights are quickly being stripped away. The recent Supreme Court case with Hobby Lobby is a case in point. The slim margin of victory demonstrates what is at stake. Had one more justice voted the other way, it would have been the start of an ugly slippery slope. Not that we can stop the slippery slope that is already rushing down hill. I could certainly fill several messages with more awful examples of eroding religious freedom in our country. We are the free-est nation on the planet and should be proud to be an American but without a monumental change, the die is already cast. Our own government is "against us."

American culture is another big fish in the sea of ant-Christian forces that are against us. Do I even need to talk about the multibillion dollar pornography business, the most profitable enterprise on the world wide web? Do I need to list the TV shows, movies, magazines and other media that flaunt immorality as proudly as a parents feel toward a newborn baby? At every turn we are being drawn to buy products and emulate whatever the latest fad happens to be. By and large, our culture stands firmly "against us."

The culture of death is "against us." Every minute that passes by, 76 abortions occur worldwide. That's more than one abortion per second. Since we began our worship service this morning there have been over 4000 abortions in the world.

Of course we should not forget Satan and the combined forces of evil which infect every one of the things on our list. What else could you put on your own list? Some of you might feel like your employer is against you in some fashion. Some have neighbors that don't appreciate their Christian beliefs. Others have family members who seem to be against them. Each of us could add to this list until it ran off of the page and out the door because we all live in an increasing God-hating, sin-loving world. These are the things we fear. The things on this list keep us awake at night. We post articles about them on facebook and follow links to more and more articles. We believe that one or more of these things could result in us losing our freedoms and liberties. They could harm us economically. They might even land us in jail eventually--or worse. When we think about who or what is "against us," it can be overwhelming at times. And it does no good to bury our heads in the sand and pretend that these things don't exist. They are real and they are a

<p><b>"against us"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darwinian evolution</li> <li>• Tolerance movement</li> <li>• Radical Islam</li> <li>• Federal government</li> <li>• American culture</li> <li>• Abortion</li> <li>• Satan, demonic forces</li> <li>• ????????</li> </ul>	<p><b>"for us"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GOD</li> </ul>	<p>near and present danger at all times. Make no mistake. These things and others are "against us."</p> <p>But that's not the whole story, is it? <i>If God is for us, who can be against us?</i> In the left ledger, the "against us" side are Darwinian evolution, the tolerance movement, radical Islam, federal</p>
--	--	---

government, American culture, abortion, Satan and demonic forces and much more.

But the "for us" column has a single word: God. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* This is a rhetorical question that begs for the answer to be screamed "No one." No one and nothing is against us? But what about the list then? Does God just trump all of those bad things just because he is God? Is life really like an enormous scale with all of the bad things on one side and God on the other? I guess you could put it that way if you want, but it is far more than just this.

Paul could have said something like, "Since God is bigger and stronger than all of these other forces, what do we have to fear?" He could have appealed to his power as Creator and Sovereign Lord over all things to assure us that all is well. Other places in Scripture do make these kinds of connections. There are any number of ways that Paul could have illustrated the fact that if God is for us, who could be against us? But he didn't choose those other attributes of God. He went right to the cross. *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?*

Let me talk about the phrase "gave him up" for a moment. In the passion story, look at the way this same word is translated.

Mark 14:10- Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to **betray** him to them.

Mark 15:1-And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and **delivered** him over to Pilate.

Matt 26:45- Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is **betrayed** into the hands of sinners.

Mark 15:15- So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he **delivered** him to be crucified.

Obviously, the Father did not "betray" his Son in the same way that Judas betrayed Jesus. That would be too strong of a word, but God did deliver Jesus to be crucified. The father did give him up, hand him over to his place on the cross. His Son was the greatest thing that the Father could have given us. There has not been nor will there ever be a more precious gift than the sinless life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

This is crucial because it answers the question, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" God is "for us" chiefly because he "gave up" his Son for us. This is the ultimate demonstration that God is 'for us.' Do you need more than this?

But here's our issue. We spend way too much of our time looking at the things in the left column and not enough time on the right side of the ledger. We look at and worry about the things which not only seem to be, but that actually are against us. How many of these things occupy your time and your worry? I don't know how many of you have memorized any Scripture yet this summer.

there is still more than half a summer to start developing a habit. I was emailing someone this week who had an audacious goal of memorizing 155 verses this summer but he were a little discouraged that he had only memorized 13 verses so far? Is that a failure? Do you think he will make it? Maybe, maybe not, but I told him, Listen, you know 13 more verses than you knew before. Moreover, it is much better to begin a long term habit than to reach a short term goal.

But here is a verse we can all put to memory. *If God is for us, who can be against us.* Let's say that one together. *If God is for us, who can be against us.* Here's what I want you to do. As soon as your mind travels to one of these worries or fears, repeat this verse. You might want to say it out loud. And you might want to personalize it. If God is for me, who can be against me? Sometimes we shy away from making the atonement our own. Yes, God gave up his Son "for us all." That's an enormous gift, but it's also your gift. If you have received his gift of eternal life, then you need to personalize this. If God is for me, who can be against me?

But then you must finish the next thought. *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?* In other words, if God gave us his best--His Son, would he not also give the rest--"all things"? And what did Paul mean by giving us "all things." The text doesn't tell us what these things are, but here's what we do know--they are good things. They are things that we need. And did you see the argument from greater to lesser? If God gave us His Son--the greatest possible gift, is there any lesser gift that he withhold from us?

Let's say that one of you needed a house to live in and I was feeling uncharacteristically generous one day and decided to give you my house. I should probably get permission from my wife first, but for the sake of argument, let's say we both agreed. This is a tough one because I am simply not that generous, but if I did give you my house, do you think I would withhold a glass of water from you if you needed one? If you were hungry, would I refuse you a piece of bread? If I truly was generous enough to give you my house--the most expensive thing I own, would I not also freely give you far less expensive things that you really need?

Do you see the beauty and generosity of God's grace in this? If God gave us his best, will he not also give the rest? If he freely "gave up" his Son, is he ever going to withhold from us something that he knows we need? Now it may not be what we think we need, but he will always give us what he knows we need. So part and parcel of God being "for us" is that he will always give us what we need. If God is for you, who can be against you?

Rich Maurer  
July 13, 2014

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-boston-bombers-were-outside-their-house/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.examiner.com/article/darwin-is-the-poster-boy-for-the-new-atheists-again>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/30/showbiz/celebrity-news-gossip/elton-john-same-sex-marriage-jesus/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/366896/age-intolerance-mark-steyn>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wnd.com/2014/01/37-muslim-nations-persecuting-christians/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.worldwatchlist.us/>

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/press/2012/January/Islamic-Majority-Countries-Top-Open-Doors-2012-World-Watch-List>

<sup>8</sup> see also: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4312/muslim-persecution-christians-january>