

What Shall We Say? • Romans 8:31-39

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Melanchthon*

1. History swings on just a few important hinges.
 2. As you look back over time you realize the past is marked by long periods of what comes to be called the status quo.
 3. But then some notable person arises with a new idea, or a decision is made in some palace or workshop or battlefield, and history begins to move in a new direction from that point forth.
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4. One of the most important such moments came in 16th Century Germany when Martin Luther nailed his list of 95 grievances with Rome to the church door at Wittenberg.
 5. That list was the opening salvo in what became known as the *Reformation*, which as Evangelical Christians, you & I are the spiritual great grandchildren of.
 6. What many don't know is that standing *with* Luther throughout his battles with Rome was a quiet but brilliant friend named Philipp Melanchthon.
 7. Melanchthon was a scholar fluent in both Greek & Latin.
 8. A good part of Martin Luther's reforms came from his friend's insights into the original language of the New Testament.
 9. Melanchthon was a gifted preacher who regularly spoke to groups of 2,000 – in a time long before microphones.
 10. When Luther died, it was Melanchthon who gave the eulogy.
 11. When he died a few years later, his body was lowered into the same grave where they now sleep side by side in the Castle Church of Wittenberg.
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12. Both Luther & Melanchthon endured great hardship in the early years of their protest against the Roman Church.
 13. When the heat was on & the temptation to back away from the conflict was fierce, Melanchthon found refuge in one passage – v. 31.
 14. As he lay on his death bed in his study, a fellow minister came to visit & read Romans 8 to him.
 - a. When he read v. 31 Melanchthon opened his eyes, lifted himself & said, “Read those words again.”
 - b. The pastor read, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”
 - c. Melanchthon said, “That's it! That's it!”

B. *The Crown*

1. These last verses of ch. 8 are the crowning expression of confidence Paul has spelled out so far.
2. Though we covered vs. 28-30 last week, vs. 31-39 continue & drive home what we find there.
3. Because God is Who He is, we can be confident that all things *are* working together to the good of making us more & more like Jesus.
4. Paul concludes by asking some questions of his readers.
 - a. After declaring the truth, he gives them an opportunity to *respond* by posing a challenge.
 - b. He knows that genuine faith must find expression in our confession, so he gives them the chance to declare their faith.

II. TEXT

A. V. 31

What then shall we say to these things?

1. That is – the “all things” of v. 28?

2. Knowing that in God’s all-powerful, all-wise, & all-loving hand *everything* is going to work out to be a part of making us more like Jesus –
 3. What should our conclusion be but confidence & peace?
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4. I want to pause & point out how Paul makes an appeal to simple logic & reason here.
 - a. Though he’s dealing with issues of faith in God, he doesn’t call his readers to *blind acceptance* of his words.
 - b. He doesn’t say, “Don’t think about it; don’t try to figure it out, just trust me.”
 - c. No – he urges us to use our powers of logic and draw a conclusion based on solid reason.
 5. It’s specially important that we see this today when atheism has taken on a new strategy in it’s War of God & faith.
 - a. Attack-atheists like Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, & Christopher Hitchens have become extremely bold of late.
 - b. They make their disdain of religious faith quite clear, saying that anyone who believes in God is stupid at best and dangerous at worst.
 - c. The Modern Age was a time when reason & faith were divorced.
 - d. The result was that religion & science were made enemies.
 - e. But it’s a false distinction.
 - f. The *strength* of the Christian faith lies in its appeal to reason.
 - g. Very simply it’s the *best explanation* for the *evidence* science is concerned with.
 6. All the way back in the time of Isaiah, God said, “Come now, let us *reason* together you & I.”
 7. God invites us to *think hard*, to *use our minds* in investigating Truth, because He knows an honest inquiry leads to Him.
 8. Jesus said, “Ask, seek, knock – and you will find what you’re looking for.”

9. Then Paul asks -

If God is for us, who can be against us?

1. The word “if” is a *certain* not *uncertain* condition, so it’s better translated as ‘*because*’ or ‘*since*.’
2. So, *because* God is for us, *since* He’s pledged Himself to our ultimate redemption, & everything becomes a tool He uses to that end, who or what can be against us?
3. To be honest – there’s a lot of stuff that seems to be *against* us.
 - a. In fact, Paul’s already mentioned some of it.
 - b. There’s sin & death & persecution & trials of all kinds.
4. But that’s not what Paul means.
 - a. He’s *not saying* that because God is for us life is going to be an iced piece of cake free from all difficulty.
 - b. He means that ultimately we will see how even the hard stuff became in His hand, the means of our glory.
5. Don’t forget that Paul’s whole goal in this chapter is to give us a *new perspective* on our new life in Christ.

6. He now gives *substance* to our confidence in God in 3 ways.

7. First , God will <i>take care</i> of us

B. V. 32

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

1. This is another rhetorical question – one in which the questions gives its own answer.
2. This isn’t rocket science. It’s a case of simple logic –

3. If the Father did the ultimate to save us, of course He'd do the lesser.
4. This is why we can categorically **reject** the fables & myths about Jesus being married & the Gnostic gospels that many are turning to today.
 - a. Listen, does it make sense that the Father would send His Son to the Cross to atone for our sins,
 - b. Then undo the **benefit** of that cross by saying Jesus was just some poor misunderstood guy?
5. What Paul says here is key to **our entire understanding** about the heart of God & **how devoted** He is to our redemption.
6. There is nothing He will not do to prove His love, no sacrifice He will not make to pay the price for us.
7. Any time you begin to doubt God's intentions toward you – remember the cross.

C. Vs. 33-34

1. **Second**, God will **protect & vindicate** us.

³³Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

2. The truth is, there **is** an accuser who tries to get God to condemn us. His name is Satan.
3. In the book of Job he's seen coming before God to accuse Job of having an insincere & mercenary faith in God.
4. God knows better and proves it to Satan.
5. In Revelation 12:10 the devil is described as the accuser of the brethren who stands before God day & night to condemn us.
6. Paul opened ch. 8 with,
There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.
7. Paul doesn't **deny** that Satan tries to accuse us. He tries – but the accusation doesn't stick because every time a charge against us is made, Jesus is at the Father's side to remind Him that sin has already been paid for.

8. My 15 year old daughter Karesse is precious to me & I am very proud of her.
 - a. Now, I'm a realist – I know she isn't perfect. She has her moments & there're things I'm working on with her.
 - b. But she's my daughter & I'm pledged by a fierce father's love to protect her.
 - c. If someone comes to me & begins to accuse & condemn her, trying to get me to punish her, it simply isn't going to work.
 - d. If there are issues of discipline that need to be taken with my daughter, love demands I do something.
 - e. But no one is going to turn my heart AGAINST my daughter, and if I sense **that** is what the accuser is trying to do, **THEY'RE** the one who's going to know my wrath, not Karesse!
 - f. If they persist, I will eventually tell them to cease- say no more!
9. And that is exactly what Rev. 12 says. The day will come when the devil will be **banished** from standing as our accuser before God.

D. Vs. 35-37

1. **Third**, God will **keep** us.

³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." ³⁷Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

1. We hear a lot about the importance of “the bottom line.”
 - a. In business it’s all about the “bottom line.”
 - b. When someone’s going on & we want them to get to the point we say, “What’s the bottom line?”
 2. Let me **Bottom-line** it for you – this whole thing we call creation, the universe; *it’s about love*.
 - a. God created the universe so He could hang a little globe called Earth there & place on it beings who could have an eternal relationship of love with Him.
 - b. That’s the bottom line.
 - c. When we neglect that love, then we don’t really know what life is.
 - d. When we fail to enjoy God’s love for us & refuse to give our love to Him, life makes no sense.
 3. But when we open up to God’s love & give ourselves to Him, everything falls into place.
 4. Since that’s the bottom line God designed us for there’s **absolutely nothing** that can thwart it.
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5. But be careful to see that Paul does not paint a false picture here.
 6. The guarantee of God’s faithful love does not mean everything will always be rosy.
 7. Smack dab in the middle of affirming His unshakable love Paul drops a line from Psalm 44 which speaks of God’s people being like sheep for the slaughter.
 8. Lately I’ve encountered a lot of people who’re facing great hardship.
 - a. Things like marital problems, financial loss, illness, & wayward children.
 - b. And many of those going through these trials have been close to giving up hope.
 - c. As the trouble has stretched on without getting any better, they begin to lose faith in God because He hasn’t turned things around and made it all better.
 9. Listen, we err when we turn what Paul says here into the demand that God work everything out as we think it ought to in the here & now.
 - a. This life & this world is not the realm in which God has promised to work everything out.
 - b. This world & life are just a temporary beginning.
 - c. It’s in the glory that awaits us in heaven that everything is resolved.
 10. Throughout the centuries, countless numbers of God’s people have been persecuted & endure hardship, right up to their last breath.
 - a. They understood Paul’s words here not to promise them relief in this life but release in the next.
 - b. They held tight to this promise as they marched to the slaughter, knowing that as they closed their eyes here, they would open them in heaven.
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11. Last May I had a chance to visit Buchenwald Concentration Camp in Germany.
 - a. It was one of the first camps to be built, before WWII started.
 - b. As the Nazi party grew in power, they wanted somewhere they could send dissenters.
 - c. The camp was only designed to house a couple thousand but by the end of the war it was jammed with over 110,000.
 - d. It wasn’t just Jews who were kept there. The camp housed political prisoners, Poles, Russians, Gypsies, & Allied POW’s.
 - e. The well known theologian & German Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was an inmate there.
 - f. Of the estimated 56,000 deaths at Buchenwald, many hundreds were believers.
 - g. People who experienced the very things Paul lists here –
 - 1) Tribulation, distress, & persecution.
 - 2) Famine, nakedness, peril, & sword.
 - h. But their experience of these things did not deny the promise of God’s steadfast love.
 - i. He was with them through it all. Even in those moments when they could not feel Him.
 12. There’s a room near the crematorium with nothing but a door & a small shuttered widow about head height.

- a. The room measures about 5 ft. square and 7 ft. high.
 - b. They'd bring a prisoner in & tell him to stand with his back against the wall opposite the little window.
 - c. Then they'd close the door, leaving the prisoner alone, standing, waiting.
 - d. Eventually the shutter would be pulled aside revealing nothing but a black hole.
 - e. Unknown to the prisoner was a Nazi taking aim with a pistol at his forehead.
 - f. The prisoner would be told to stand at attention and be real still.
 - g. Then the gun would fire and the prisoner would fall to the ground, dead.
13. Many of those executed in that room were believers.
- a. They closed their eyes in that outpost of hell to open them in the glory of heaven.
 - b. In an instant they went from staring in fear at a black hole, not knowing what was happening, to unutterable peace & joy, looking into the face of God who they then knew with absolute surety that He'd never left their side.
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14. What makes us **MORE** than conquerors as Paul says in v. 37 is when we remember that it isn't just about enduring hardship.
15. It's keeping in mind that God uses *even that hardship* for our good.
16. We are *more than conquerors* when we stop seeing trouble as merely something to *endure*.
17. We look at it from the perspective of faith in the love of God & realize in His hand it becomes blessing that forges our glory.

E. Vs. 38-39

³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Persuaded

1. Paul was *persuaded* **NOTHING** could come between him & God's love.
2. What cinched it for him was the cross.
 - a. Where God become man laid down His life that we might live.
 - b. And live for what? Not just to survive, but to enjoy an eternal love affair with the Greatest Lover of all eternity—God!
3. This table commemorates that. These elements spell out God's love for you.
4. Feast on God's love today. Be *persuaded* of God's abiding love.