

Lent 1

February 18, 2018

Romans 8:31-39

The Conquering Power of God Who is For Us.

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Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

Just before Paul's words of our text, the apostle laid out the clear progression of God's work on our behalf. "those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. Those he justified, he also glorified." In that context, God also works for our good in all things.

Paul now adds rhetorical questions and answers to those truths. He wants us to realize the powerful grace of God in our lives; now in time and later in in eternity. Look with me to **The Conquering Power of God Who is For Us**. He did not spare his own Son. He justifies us. He loves us always.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" God is for us so no one can resist us. Oh, they can try. But they cannot oppose us because God is with us. Their opposition is as if it were not happening. Their grumbling is a vain thing, as the psalm writer states in Psalm 2. God is for us in more than mere good feeling. He acts on our behalf in those ways Paul listed earlier.

The conquering power of God who is for us is first that he did not spare his own Son. This is an argument from the greater to the lesser. Since God the Father did not spare his greatest treasure, his own Son, for our redemption and salvation, then we can expect all things from God. Paul's inspired words are emphatic, "Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?"

Everything else is less than Jesus Christ. God the Father will give us all things for his own Son's sake, in connection with the greater gift.

God's own Son, Jesus Christ, is the guarantee of every spiritual and temporal blessing God promises us and we require. The Father did not spare even him. Our faith for daily living and finally dying as God's people rests on that reality. This is the reality of the Lenten message. Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest. Jesus Christ is the perfect Lamb of God. Lent is not about my giving something up for God. Lent is about God giving up something for me. He did not spare his own Son. This is the conquering power of God who is for us.

In Jesus' sacrifice, the God who is for us justifies us. He declares the entire world not guilty of sin. Jesus' holy life he offered up into death on the cross is the full payment for my sin and guilt. How do we know? The Father raised in Son's body from the dead. Paul wrote about Jesus to the Romans at the end of chapter four, "He was handed over to death because of our trespasses and was raised to life because of our justification."

So what now? "Who will bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies? Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus, who died and, more than that, was raised to life, is the one who is at God's right hand and who is interceding for us?" Not Satan, not my guilty conscience, can bring any charge of sin against me because God has declared me holy in Christ. No one can condemn me because, as Paul wrote at the start of chapter 8, "So then, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Jesus, my Mediator, is for me at God's right hand, defending me on the basis of his saving work on the cross. God the Father is listening.

This is the conquering power of God who is for me. The Father listens to his Son and will not condemn me to hell. God does not listen to Satan present a record of my sins. Luther said, "Dear devil, I have heard the record. But I have committed far more sins which do not even stand in your record. Put them down too. . . ." Luther trusted the conquering power of the one who is for us. He justifies us.

There is an ominous tone as Paul lists the attackers of our faith which God's love in Christ maintains. He loves us always in the midst of all these results of sin in the world. God who is for us is greater than all the things he has created, Paul sums up as "anything in all creation."

There are going to be literally, pressures and narrowness. We will be in dire straits. We may well face deprivation of the basics in life, clothing and food. There are those today who consider Christians as sheep to be slaughtered. Another argument from the greater to the lessor. The Creator is greater than all he creates so it must serve his purposes. Not one of these things in all creation can separate us from the Father's love for us in Christ. Not even angels or the demonic rules of the dark kingdoms. "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Even in death the conquering power of God who loves us holds us safe as we cross into the kingdom of glory. He loves us always. God is not the God of the dead but of the living. He gives our souls life at his right hand and promises new life to our mortal bodies in immortality at the resurrection from the dead. Christianity is a religion of the here and now and of the hereafter. The love of God in Christ is love for life and love in death. He loves us always with his conquering power because he is for us.

"What will separate us from the love of Christ?" who promised, "I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you?" Nothing in all creation. Amen. <SDG>