

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Romans 8:26-39

Verses 31,32

What will we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also freely give us all things with him?

The context are the general sufferings and difficulties of life with the addition of persecution (18). Creation and believers are waiting for the liberation that will occur at the resurrection (19-27).

Paul's thoughts now turn to the opposition in the world to Christian people. He asks the rhetorical question about all **these things**. **If God is for us, who is against us?** The second rhetorical question goes beyond the ancient faith of Ps 118:6 and even the Emmanuel who is with his people (Mt 1:23) to proclaim that God is **for** υπέρ believers in Christ. God is the advocate of his people through his Spirit (26) and through Christ Jesus (34) who are interceding for them.

The support for this gospel promise in the most basic message of the early kerygma: **He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all**. **Spare** ἐφείσατο is aorist and looks at the once and for all moment when the Father offered his Son to the world through the cross. He not merely gave, **but handed over or delivered** παρέδωκεν his Son (Jn 3:16). This action expresses both the grievous loss for the Father because it is a deliverance into death but it also expresses his tremendous love that results in the highest gift and the most effective, life-giving event of history.

Having given his highest possession to believers, **how will he not also freely give us all things with him?** Christ said that the meek inherit the earth (Mt 5:5). Paul is offering the hope not only of all of God's focus being on his children as well as the well the gift of his Son but the gift of **all things**. They also inherit the glory of God's realm and victory over all adversaries and spiritual powers.

Verses 33-36

Who can bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who can condemn? Christ Jesus who died; more than that, who was raised is at the right hand of God interceding for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written:

Because of you we are put to death all day long; we considered sheep for slaughter.

Since God is for his children and has given his Son to them as well as all things, there can be no adversary that can have a lasting or significant impact on believers. First, when believers encounter someone bringing a **charge** ἐγκαλέσει **against them**, they have two defences. First, they are the elect, chosen by God. In a similar way to the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, the Lord has chosen believers in Christ out of the nations of the world to be his own people. They are the true Israel. Secondly, Paul leans on the doctrine of justification: **It is God who justifies; who can condemn?** He does not have in mind transgressions against his will by Christians. Rather, he is thinking of local law courts, false trials or verdicts that go against believers because they follow Christ rather than the official and legal religions of the Empire or Judaism. The verb κατακρινών condemn or literally, **a judgement against**, makes this clear. No matter what the world brings against believers in the court room, they stand right before God through his act to accept them and make and declare them righteous.

The plaintiff's counsel, a local jurisdiction or a malicious complainant, is opposed by the counsel of defense, namely **Christ Jesus who died; more than that, who was raised is at the right hand of God interceding for them**. A human judgement may go against believers but a divine one is always in their favour. Paul goes beyond justification to the on going reality of **Christ Jesus pleading** to his

Father to either deliver them at the present time or support them as they face death. **Christ died**, a show of love and grace to believers but God raised him and placed him in a position of authority next to himself to bring all the resources of heaven to their aid.

Now follows a list of things associated with the precarious situation believers faced: **tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword**. The stripping of property and houses did occur no doubt leading to great **distress, lack of clothing** and **shelter** and even **famine**. **Tribulation** arose from attacks and being dragged before the courts and their lives were consequently in **peril** when verdicts went against them, including execution by the **sword**. According to 13:4, the state carried the sword, literally, a dagger.

These outcomes will **not separate believers from the love of Christ**. Believers have an unbreakable bond with Christ forged in baptism (6:3,5). No one is stronger than Christ when he exerts his love on believers. Therefore, though ostracised, stripped of possessions or even executed, the baptised people of God remain within Christ's circle of love.

Verses 37-39

No, in all these things we are victorious conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor cosmic rulers, neither things present nor things to come, neither powers, neither height nor depth nor any thing else in creation is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.