

## “God Is For Us” [SLIDE]

Romans 8:1-39

7.26.09

How many of you have seen the Antiques Road Show? I enjoy the show because you learn history, people’s stories and can try guessing what the object might be worth. Many people bring to the show objects that have been collecting dust to see what they are worth. Some owners are blown away by the appraisals. I wonder how many people are sitting on something of great worth but don’t know it because they never bothered to get it appraised? Every believer in Christ is sitting on a gold mine whether you know it or not. This morning we are going to reveal what great treasures that God has for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Because God is for us, He has a lot to give us. Heaven is one of the greatest gifts we receive but that is not all that we receive when we believe in Jesus. Please turn with me to Romans chapter 8. [SLIDE]

Many theologians believe this is one of the greatest chapters in the entire Bible. After spending time in it together I believe you will agree with them. Romans 8 could be broken up into at least three messages. There is that much great material to study. However, we are following along with *The One Year Bible* readings so we do not have time to stop and soak it in. This morning, we are going to do an espresso shot- a shot of concentrated truth. We will see five ways that God shows that He is for us. May you grasp these truths and allow them to change your lives. The first way is:

### I. **We are free from condemnation.** [SLIDE]

Look at verse 1 again, ‘Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.’ Do you realize how shocking that verse is? We all deserve condemnation. We have all sinned and not lived up to God’s standards. The result of sin is eternal punishment- total separation from God in Hell. That is what we justly deserve. Hell is real and it is terrible. The Bible describes Hell as the eternal place of torment for those who did not choose to accept Jesus. Satan and his demons will also be there tormenting those present. The worst thing about Hell is

that God is not there. That means people are forever separated from the loving God. No prayer for help will work.

We cannot fathom how terrible Hell is. But let me give you a small taste of what it might be like in regard to relationships. We live in a society that needs communication now! We use cell phones, Instant Messaging, texting, Facebook, Twitter and other means to communicate quickly. A side note regarding immediate communication: because we are so committed to instant communication I am seeing something that is incredibly dangerous. Too many people are texting while driving. I see people driving down my street- where many kids play- focusing more on their phones than the road ahead. Please stop texting while driving before someone gets hurt. No life is worth short abbreviated messages. If you have to text then pull over and then do it. Otherwise wait until you are out of your vehicle.

Okay, back to the description of Hell. In regards to communication, I believe Hell is the place where no communication will be possible with those we love - no cell phones, no IM, no texting, no Twitter. Nothing. No communication whatsoever. But we are now free from condemnation. And that freedom doesn't come from a life well lived. It comes from the sacrifice that Jesus paid.

In verse 1 we see the word "therefore". Remember that whenever you see a therefore you are to ask the question, "What is the therefore there for?" Therefore points back to something that was previously written. What Paul was referring to in regards to being free from condemnation is found in Romans 5:15-19. I want to read it from the NLT.

**[SLIDE]** Romans 5:15-19, "But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. <sup>16</sup> And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. <sup>17</sup> For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all

who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. <sup>19</sup> Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous."

Because God condemned our sin in Christ as our sacrifice He can now justly avoid having to condemn those who are in a relationship with Jesus. John writes in chapter 3 verses 17-18, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

What a wonderful gift to be free from accusation, free from judgment for our sins, free from condemnation. That gift is priceless. But God doesn't stop at just freeing us from condemnation. The second way God shows us He is for us is:

## **II. We are empowered to live a new life. [SLIDE]**

There is a battle waging on inside of believers in Jesus Christ. The battle is between our flesh or sinful nature and the Spirit of God. Those who do not follow Jesus are empowered by the sin nature. Romans 6 explains that unbelievers are slaves to sin. Their master is sin and they must do as sin commands. As a result, unbelievers are helpless and cannot fulfill what God commands. In verses 5-8 of chapter 8 you can see the results of a mind following the sinful nature. Listen to the description of someone who is controlled by the sinful nature- sinful minds focus on what our sinful nature desires, which leads to death. A person who lives by the desires of the sinful nature is hostile toward God and therefore cannot please Him. That is the predicament for those who do not know Jesus and what used to be our predicament before we gave our lives to Jesus. God saw the situation was hopeless on our end so He jumped into action. Romans 5:6, 8, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly...8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Isn't that great news- that God has rescued us so that we are no longer slaves to sin?

Though we are free from the requirements of the sinful nature and it is no longer our master, we still have to battle it. We have to choose to be led by the Spirit who is inside us. Romans 8:12 says, “We have an obligation- but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.” Our sinful nature does not deserve our allegiance. What good has it done us? It has done us no good and therefore should be considered our enemy. We owe our freedom and lives to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are obligated to follow the Spirit. He deserves our allegiance.

So how do we keep from living by the sinful nature? It is by daily surrendering our will, mind, body, emotions and heart to the Holy Spirit so He can be in charge of us. And when we sin we confess and give ourselves back to Him. And it also requires that we watch what our minds think about. Remember that a mind focused on the sinful nature will take us the wrong way. Remember “Garbage in. Garbage out.” What I put in my mind comes out in my actions. If you research what violent kids and adults set their minds on I guarantee it is not positive, uplifting things. A steady diet of offensive music, violent games, violent movies and violent television will most likely result in a violent child, youth or adult. What are we feeding our minds? What are we allowing into our kids’ minds? Filling our minds with God’s Word, and positive things will help us to follow the Spirit and do right.

We have already seen two wonderful gifts from God proving that He is for us- no condemnation and being empowered to live a new life. We have three more wonderful gifts to go. The third way that God shows He is for us is:

### III. We are adopted into God’s forever family. [SLIDE]

Speaking of family. [SLIDES]

[SLIDE] Verses 14-17, “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

As a result of Christ's death and resurrection and the empowerment of the Spirit we are now God's children- male and female. We are no longer slaves but children of the King. John 1:12-13, "But to all who believed him [Jesus] and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. <sup>13</sup>They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God."

What an amazing gift. God has brought us into His forever family. But not only that, He has also made us heirs of Him and co-heirs with Christ. [SLIDE] Galatians 4:3-7, "When we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. <sup>4</sup> But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. <sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir." Do you know what that means? It means that we are inheriting all of God's blessings. We are rightful heirs of whatever the King desires to give us.

Because we live in a society that believes in equality we can miss what God's Word has revealed. A woman in NT times, was seen more as property than as an equal partner. And when a father died, his inheritance would go to the sons. The first son would receive 2/3 of the inheritance and the rest of the sons would split the remaining 1/3. Daughters did not receive any of the inheritance. They were married off so that they would fall underneath their husband's financial provision. Romans 8 is saying that women are co-equals with men. They have the same rights and privileges as the sons. And the same rights and privileges as Jesus Himself. Shocking! It is no wonder Jesus can be seen as The Liberator of women. The truth that we are children of God, which the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit, should motivate us to cry out "Abba, Father." Abba is Aramaic for Father. Some would translate Abba as an intimate form of addressing God like "Papa."

Some of you have never really had a good relationship with your father and that really hurts. Some of you may not have even known your father. Some of you like me lost your father at a young age. But do you know that we have a perfect Father who is intimately involved in every detail of our lives? He is at every sporting event we play. He is at every dance recital. He is at every play we perform. He is at every doctor's appointment. He runs errands with us. He is

always with us and is watching us. And His love is always enthusiastic and unwavering toward us!

Being co-heirs with Christ also means we may also share in His suffering and in His glory. Though we are sons and daughters of the King that doesn't mean we will be exempt from suffering. If Jesus wasn't exempt why should we be? The full benefits of sonship will not fully take place until we enjoy perfect holiness in our resurrected and glorified bodies. Until then according to verses 18-23, we and creation are subjected to frustration until that final day.

So can you see already how God is for you? We don't need any more evidence. The case is closed. But God wants to reveal more. The fourth way that shows God is for us is:

**IV. We are being molded into the likeness of Jesus. [SLIDE]**

God's purpose is not to make us nicer people or to make us just a little bit better than we already are. Rather, God's purpose is to do an extreme makeover on us until we are like Jesus. That process is called sanctification. There are three aspects of sanctification. The first aspect is positional which Pastor Tony shared last Sunday. Positional sanctification refers to our standing with God. In God's eyes we are perfect because He sees Christ's righteousness in us. We are holy because of Christ's holiness. That is why Paul often addressed many of his letters to the saints or Holy Ones. The second aspect of sanctification is ongoing purification. This is the aspect that Paul is referring to in this chapter. It is the process of being molded to be more like Jesus. The third aspect of sanctification is called glorification- when we will be completely perfect and can no longer sin. That takes place when we die or when Jesus returns whichever is first.

The process of being sanctified or completely perfect will require a lifetime. So how do we become more like Jesus? Is it God's role or our role? We both play a part. Our part is surrendering to the Spirit's working and allowing Him to move in us to do what He wills. As we surrender we will be drawn to practicing spiritual disciplines that will further our purity. Examples of spiritual disciplines are: studying God's Word, prayer, generous giving, solitude, fasting and so on.

Paul's focus in Romans 8 is predominantly on God's role in our sanctification. Remember, he is proving to us that God is for us. Verses 26-27 describe one of the ways that God is working for our sanctification. Look at it again with me, [SLIDE] "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." I like how the NLT translates verse 27, "And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will." The Holy Spirit is always praying earnestly for the Father's will to be done in our lives.

Not only is the Holy Spirit praying purifying prayers over us but the Father works through all things for our best. Romans 8:28 is a promise that so many of us cling to. "In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called to his purpose." God working in all things is not based on how much we love Him. I am a sinful father. But I try to do good for my kids even when they do not love me like they ought. God is perfect. His love and commitment to us is unconditional. Therefore, since we are called by Him He will work all things for good in our lives.

One of the problems with this verse is understanding what "good" means. We all have our own opinions on what is good. And often we think of good as being temporal- the here and now. So if something bad happens we claim this verse and expect some kind of restitution soon. But God has a different definition of good. And His timetable is different than ours. Taking something that was bad can sometimes take our lifetimes in order to become good. Let me clear: God doesn't cause bad. Bad is the result of living in a sinful world. God allows bad. The difference is night and day. When bad things come our way, sometimes He allows access to our lives so that He can use it for good and other times He stops it in its tracks. He doesn't cause bad so that He can make it good.

What can we claim from this verse? Douglas Moo writes, Romans 8:28 means, "Nothing will touch our lives that is not under the control and direction of our loving heavenly Father. Everything we do and say, everything that people do to us or say about us, every experience we

will ever have- all are sovereignly used by God for our good.” (Moo, p. 278) And He adds, “We will not always understand how the things we experience work to good, and we will certainly will not always enjoy them. But we do know that nothing comes into our lives that God does not allow and use for his own beneficent purposes.” Isn’t it comforting to know that God is intimately involved in shaping the bad into good and ultimately for our purification?

Verses 29-30 can take up a whole sermon or two. Theologians have been debating these powerful words for centuries; words like predestination and election. The bottom line here is that Paul is reinforcing God’s work in our salvation- saving us from spiritual death as well as working for our purification- becoming like Jesus. God is fully engaged in this process. So you can be confident that you will be “conformed to the likeness of His Son” because “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6)

Isn’t God amazing? Well, He is not done. He is not finished showing you that He is for you. Here is the fifth way:

**V. We are absolutely secure in God’s love. [SLIDE]**

Verses 31-39, [SLIDE] “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> 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? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

So if God is for us who can be against us? Who is greater than God Himself? No one. Who can bring charges against God’s children? No one can separate us from God’s love. Evil spirits

cannot separate us, the devil cannot separate us, death cannot separate us. Nothing in all creation can separate us- that means everything because God created all things. That even means us. God remains faithfully in love with us even when we turn our backs. He is the Prodigal God- the One who is recklessly wasteful with His love and grace. God is saying His powerful love is stronger than anything. It cannot be separated from the object of His love.

Look again at verse 34, [SLIDE] “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.” Talk about overkill. First, first we have God the Spirit interceding for us- pleading God’s will for our lives and then second we have Jesus, God in human flesh, sitting in power at God the Father’s right hand pleading on our behalf. The Trinity is actively involved in your life. If that is the case we are absolutely secure in God’s love.

Are you getting the picture of complete security? Are you feeling His amazing love for you? Are you confident in His faithfulness? Romans 8 begins with no condemnation and the chapter ends with no separation. And everything in between- all of it is proving that God is for us.

What a wonderful treasure that God has given you. If you were to take it to the Antiques Road Show they would not be able to put a price to it. It is priceless. We do know that it cost Jesus much pain though. So what now? If God is for you are you for Him? If you have not surrendered your life to Jesus today is the right day. In a few minutes I will give you an opportunity to just do that and receive the God who is for you.

If you are already a believer of Jesus then how about a life lived in joy, thankfulness and appreciation? How about a life of surrender and obligation to living by the Spirit? How about serving God wholeheartedly? How about giving this good news to those who have not heard or understood it? There are so many people that feel unloved and alone. God is for them too! He offers these treasures to them as well. One of the applications from this passage is our minds, hearts and emotions fully engaged in all out praise through music. We will do that after prayer

“That’s Why We Praise Him”