

We're in the midst of 3 months of readings from Epistle to the Romans. We're also in the 3rd week of readings from Romans chapter 8. And today our lesson is one of the biggest bursts of praise anywhere in the New Testament.

The music swells. The instruments are playing fast and loud and joyfully. And Paul offers words of great celebration and praise.

In fact, this is the 2nd to the last scripture that's sung in Handel's *Messiah*: "If God be for us, who can be against us." It's a statement of great praise before the final chorus from Revelation, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain."

So let's consider what Paul is saying here.

"If God is for us, who is against us?"¹

The language is courtroom language. Paul mentions the words condemn and condemnation numerous times in Romans, including chapter 8. Condemnation is about being found guilty, and of being sentenced to punishment.

But Paul also said, right off the bat in Romans 8 that there "is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."²

In other words, we are found not guilty. The classic term is we are justified. We don't use the term justify or justification much in our world today. The most common usage is about margins on a word processor. By justifying the text, you make it align either with the right, the left, the center, or both sides.

Part of the great argument in Romans is that those who believe in / have faith in / pledge their allegiance to Christ Jesus are justified. They're made right with God.

And so by the time we get to the end of Romans 8, Paul is using language for a trial that is already over.

God has found us "justified" and not condemned even before the trial begins. And since God is the judge, that means it's a done deal. And Paul throws in that Jesus is also the one who intercedes for us—he's like our defense attorney.

So Paul is telling us in the strongest possible terms, that if you're worried about God being judgmental or harsh, then you've missed out on the essence of the Gospel. Those who believe in Jesus are found innocent because of Jesus, even before any trial can start. And God has already pronounced the verdict for us: "not guilty."

So there's no condemnation from God for those who follow his Son.

¹ Rom 8:31

² Rom 8:1

What's more, who can possibly bring up any charge against us? What prosecuting attorney could oppose Jesus who defends us? And what good would it do anyway if the verdict has already been given, and we are found innocent, justified, right with God.

That's why Paul says, "If God is for us, who is against us?"³

That's why Paul says, "Who will bring any charge against God's (people)? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?"⁴

Who could possibly bring any charge against us if God has already given us the verdict, "not guilty"?

So Paul asks, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"⁵

It's a tough list. Hardship, distress, persecution, famine, peril, the sword. These are all ways that Christians are suffering in Paul's day.

But Paul says, none of these things can separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. So if you're undergoing hardship or distress or persecution, or anything else, don't worry about these things ultimately. They can never separate you from God's love for you in Jesus Christ.

What's more, in Jesus we have won the victory, we have been promised eternal life, eternal victory. So Paul is basically saying,

'Hardship, distress, persecution, famine, peril, the sword.'

'Bring it on! Do your worst! Because we've already won!'

Through the cross and through the resurrection, we have won the victory. So Paul says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (through Jesus Christ)."⁶

And then Paul crescendos into a burst of poetic praise in the last 2 verses of the chapter:

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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."⁷

What can get in between us and God's love for us? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

³ Rom 8:31

⁴ Rom 8:33-34

⁵ Rom 8:35

⁶ Rom 8:37

⁷ Rom 8:38-39

Nothing in the present, and nothing to come. So there's nothing to fear now, and nothing to fear in the future.

Not angels nor rulers—they may have power, but they're not more powerful than God.

Nothing in the sky above... Nothing in the earth below... Nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from the love of God which is given to us through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing anywhere... Nothing at any time... Nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from the love of God.

If God is for us, absolutely no one else can stand against us.

So there's nothing to fear from God—he loves us.

And there's nothing to fear from anyone else—they can't overpower or overrule God.

There's nothing to be feared in this present life. There's nothing to be afraid of in the future. Not even death itself.

In the rest of Romans, Paul will lay out some of the implications of this good news. But nothing transcends this good news, and the beautiful way Paul expresses it.

If God is for us, who can be against us?
Nothing separates us from the love of God.