

Romans Chapter 8 v 31 A

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 August 2017

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Good morning. Good morning. Welcome to all of you. Particularly, it's lovely to see so many visitors and guests amongst us, members of families, folk back from being away and so on.

We do trust that together as we worship the Lord, as we draw near to him, we might know that unity of his Holy Spirit and that work and help of his grace.

The verse that's on the screen behind me is that second verse of Psalm 103. Psalm 103 is just one of those wonderfully uplifting psalms that really stirs your heart.

You know, some of the psalms are, why are you downcast, O my soul? And everybody's against me. But Psalm 103 is full of praise. And verse 2 says, praise the Lord. Or if you've got the AV, bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all of his benefits.

One of the chief failings, I think, that we have as Christians is that we forget. We forget the blessings of God. We forget all that he's done for us. We're so caught up with the problems or difficulties of life, we forget just how good is the God we adore.

[1 : 10] So our first hymn is a modern hymn. It's going to come up on the screen behind me. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Let's stand and sing together. Let's stand and sing together. Let's continue to worship that holy name in prayer together.

Let us all pray. Let us all pray. As we come into your presence this morning, O Lord, our God, we come with thankfulness and with joy for all that you are and all that you've done for us.

Lord, though there may be things in our minds, matters on our hearts that weigh us down, though there may be concerns and anxieties for the future or the coming days, we thank you that we can leave them in your capable care and we can set our eyes and lift them up to the worship and the praise of yourself and of your Son and of your Holy Spirit, the triune God.

Lord, we thank you for the truth of which we've sung and of which we've read, that you are a God who has given and given and given and given again, overflowing pouring into our lives blessing without number.

Lord, we thank you for the truth of which we've sung and given and given and given and given again, overflowing with our lives blessing without number. Lord, we thank you that we are a people who have been loved by God, are loved by God, shall forever be loved by God.

[3 : 06] Not because of anything in us which is lovely or delightful, though we are made in your image and created by you. Sin has spoiled that loveliness.

Sin has spoiled and corrupted that image of your grace and goodness in us. But, O Lord, we thank you that yet you still love us and have proven that love by the giving of your Son, the Lord Jesus, to rescue and to save and to deliver and to bring us into that right relationship with yourself.

O Lord, we thank you that, O Lord our God, it is of your grace and your grace alone that we are saved. And it's by your grace we come this morning to you, to come to bring you our thanks and our praise, to come to worship and adore you and tell you, O Lord, again how we love you because you first loved us.

But, O Lord, we thank you that is not only why we're here. We're here, O Lord, because you want to meet with us and speak with us and change us. You want to tell us more of your wonder and your love.

You want to reveal to us more and more of the benefits and blessings that are ours because you want to strengthen us in our weak faith, because you want to encourage us in our hope, because, O Lord, you know what it is like to live and walk upon this planet.

[4 : 28] For you yourself, Lord Jesus, lived amongst us, suffered and died. So we pray, O Lord, come down by your Holy Spirit, come down afresh upon our hearts and minds.

Cause us to lift our voices in your worship and praise. And cause, O Lord, we pray, us to know your blessing upon us now. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's read together from our Bibles, from God's Word. And if you'd like to turn with me to Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome.

Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8. And we're going to pick up in the middle of the chapter, pick up from verse 18.

And read through to the end of the chapter. So Romans and chapter 8, verse 18. If you've got the New International Version, it's got a heading that the translators have put in, present suffering and future glory.

[5 : 36] Page 1135. If you've got one of the church Bibles, page 1135 in the church Bible. Let's hear the Word of God.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not have, we wait for it patiently.

[6 : 56] 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 through wordless groans.

And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

And those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. Those he justified, he also glorified. What then shall we say in response to these things?

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

[8 : 02] Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. 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.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, for your sake we face death all day long.

We are considered as sheep for the slaughter. No. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels, nor demons, neither the present, nor the future, nor any powers, 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. I would like to have your Bibles open to Romans and chapter 8, those verses that we read earlier on.

It's one verse in particular, or rather it's half a verse really in particular, that I want us to think about. And I hope, God willing, not just this morning, but the next three Sundays, before I go on holiday, I want us to draw from, I hope, this verse, some real encouragement for our souls.

[9 : 35] And it's verse 31, it's the second half of that verse, which is, if God is for us, who can be against us?

I wonder what you think of that verse this morning. God is for us, who can be against us? It's a rhetorical question in the sense that Paul isn't asking us to list all the things that are against us, but in one sense he's saying simply this, if God is for us, no one can be against us.

Nothing can be too big, nothing can be too great, nothing can be too terrible for us. If God is for us, that's the end of the matter. But I wonder if that's what you think this morning.

Because in our lives there are times, perhaps protracted times, long times, or short times, when it seems everyone and everything is against us.

Think about the government that we live under at this time, and have done in my lifetime at least. A government that continues to make laws which call sin good, and call God's laws wicked.

[10 : 52] Perhaps we feel like the taxman is against us, always wanting more of our hard-earned money. Time, of course, is against us.

We never have enough of it to do all the things that we want to do. Our boss at work is against us, because he wants his pound of flesh, and yet pays us so very little.

Our neighbours are against us, because they hold garden parties with loud music into the early hours, but never invite us to go along. Our families are against us.

They have unrealistic expectations of what we should do, or what we can do. Even our bodies are against us, and our minds are against us, as they get older and weaker, as they pick up illnesses and diseases.

Or they just don't remember the things that we want them to remember. There can be times when it seems there is a lot against us.

[11 : 58] Not just who, but what. Don't just turn off yet. Here we have a statement in God's Word that means whoever or whatever is against us, we are not outnumbered, but we are in fact in the majority.

As someone once said, one plus God is the majority. God is for us. Well, who are the us?

Let's just break this little sentence down. Who are the us? Every individual Christian believer is part of the us. They've been called in so far the children of God.

That's what Paul makes mention of again and again. And notice that whenever he speaks, he speaks of us. He includes himself along with all those who are told who love God. All those who have put their faith and trust in him.

Particularly it's all those, verse 30, who have experienced these things. Been predestined, called, justified and glorified.

[13 : 08] So if you are a Christian this morning, then it is you are part of the us. God is for us. Even when we feel, when we think, even when we believe, he is not for us.

God is for us, dear friends, even when everyone and everything feels or appears to be against us. And the Christians to whom Paul was writing were Christians who felt that the world was against them.

They were Christians living in the first century, probably in the middle of the first century, and they were not exempt from suffering. Notice there at the start, verse 18, I consider that our present sufferings.

In other words, yours and mine. They were people who were suffering. They were living during the time of the Roman Empire, an empire which fiercely persecuted Christians throughout the time up until around about 300 AD.

And especially those Christians who lived in Rome had it hardest of all. And notice, of course, that this letter is written to Christians in Rome. Nero was probably one of the maddest of the emperors.

[14 : 22] Not necessarily the worst, but one of the worst. He reigned from 54 AD to 68 AD, and he made it a sport to kill Christians, to torture them, and to make their deaths the most horrible possible.

So it felt like for these Christians, to whom Paul was writing, God is for us, that actually the whole of the Roman world was against them, and therefore the whole of the world.

No one was on their side. No one was standing for them. It's not surprising, of course, that we find that they long to be in heaven. Notice how Paul says earlier on, verse 23, not only so, we ourselves, who are the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for the redemption of our bodies.

Long for Jesus to come. Long for us to be taken out of these bodies, this world of suffering and difficulty, and be in heaven. And Paul himself understood what it was to suffer.

He knew what it was to have the world against him. If you read in some of his other letters, particularly to Corinthians, he talks about the very detail of the sufferings he endured. He was shipwrecked. He was beaten with rods.

[15 : 35] He was stoned to the point that the people thought he was dead. He was hungry and thirsty and naked without anybody. He had the whole world against him, and sometimes the whole world on his shoulders.

And yet, he is the one who knew and understood and gives this great assurance. In verse 28, we know that in all things God works for the good, those who love him, who've been called according to

his purpose.

So Paul's rational and understandable conclusion is, when we consider all these things that he writes about in verses 28 to 30, the only conclusion we can come to is this, God is for us. And as he says there in verse 32, the great evidence, above all evidence, is the giving of his son. 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?

And it's that statement next week that I want us to look at. What about this morning? Some of us may still not be very convinced. Some of us this morning may still not be certain that God is for us, or the truth of it.

[16:56] Because of the list I've given, or some other list, some other concerns that we have, are the things that make us feel as if the world, or the people, or whatever it is, is against us.

And to be against us is much more than the sense that God is for us. There's so much heartache in my life, in my past, in my experience. There's so much sorrow and grief that you will never be able to convince me that God is for me.

What does it mean that God is for us? We know who the us are, the believer, the Christian. But what does it mean that God is for us? It means, first of all, he's on our side. He's for us. Or rather, we're on his side, and he's for us.

It means he's never against us. He is never thinking of ways to harm us. He is never planning to put us down, or to hurt us.

God never acts against our good. God is for us. All of God's plans, all of God's thinking about us, is for our best.

[18:05] Just listen to what he says to some of us in the past. Jeremiah 29, 11. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.

Plans to prosper you, not to harm you. Plans to give you hope, and a future. Now he was again writing to believers who were up against it, who felt the world was against them.

They were believers who'd been taken from their home in Judah, taken into exile in Babylon, into a hostile empire. No doubt they felt that God wasn't for them, that in some way he was not on their side.

But to them God says, my plans are for you. So it means that God is on our side. He's for us. It means also that God is rooting for us.

He is for us. He's behind us, in that sense. He's our greatest fan. He's our most devoted supporter.

[19:05] God is for us. He wants us to succeed. He wills us to do well, to excel in our workplaces, in our homes, in our church.

More than anybody else in the universe, God is for us. You see, the truth is that he delights in us. He takes great joy in us. He has pleasure in us. He counts us as his most precious possession. Listen again to what God says to some of us before.

In the past, Isaiah 43, verse 4. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you.

That's what God is saying about us. Because he is for us. Dear friends, since we are so very dear to him, then he works constantly for our good.

[20:08] We know that in all things, God works. It's not just enough that God is for us, in one sense, standing at the sidelines, cheering and willing us on.

It's not just enough that God is for us, in the sense that he's on our side, and his desires and plans are for us. But God works. God is active. God is not a sitting on his bottom God.

He's a God who gets up and gets his hands dirty and involved with the things of our lives. He is intimately touching and moving and working in your life and mine, dear Christian, every moment of every day, whether you're awake or whether you're asleep.

Throughout the whole of your life, God is actively at work so as to do you good and to accomplish in your life the very best. That's what God is for us means.

It cannot mean anything less than that, and I'm sure it means much, much more than that. It may well be that even after I've said these things and we've read these things and considered these things, we may still be sitting, feeling, what else is the evidence that God is for us?

[21:17] Apart from what God has said, especially because at times I do feel that God is not for us, or at least the world against us is so very strong.

Think of the church at the moment. Many of us as believers, we're in churches, some of you in other parts of the country. None of us have churches, I don't presume anyway, that are bursting at the seams with people beating on the door, saying, let me in.

What must I do to be saved? We may not have hostile opposition in the sense of being stoned as Paul was or beaten with rods in this country, but we know that the country and the people of our community and our nation are indifferent, uncaring, and unconcerned about the things of God and consider the very word of God and the laws of God to be foolishness, to be stupidity, to be wrong. So there's lots of us, as we see, to make us say, well, what else? What else is there to make us be assured that God is for us? What evidence is there? Well, the evidence, first part, is it's the whole of the Bible.

The whole of the Bible is written as a record of God working and acting for us, for God's people, those who believe in him, those who put their faith in him, and the list of people that God has worked for and has been for is very, very, very, very long.

[22 : 48] That's why it's so important, dear friends, as Christians, we read our Old Testament, we read our Bible, because what we find is, as we have done in the previous weeks looking at the life of Gideon, is that God is for us in all sorts of circumstances and situations.

Think of Moses and the people of God at the beginning of Exodus, in slavery, treated abominably, but God was for them, and he rescued them and brought them out into a place of liberty and into a place of their own homeland and future.

Think of David as he stood as a young boy before nine foot tall Goliath, who was determined to smash David into a pulp in the ground, but God was for him.

Think of Gideon, as we've already mentioned, with just 300 men facing 135,000 armed warriors. God was for him. Think of Daniel, as he's lowered into that pit or den, which is full of hungry lions, but God was for him.

And we could go on and we could go on and we could go on. Think of Rahab, the prostitute in the city of Jericho. God was for her. Ruth, a young widow who was homeless, God was for her.

[24 : 02] So many more besides. All of these people lived in a world which was against them. They discovered amazingly, wonderfully, that God was for them, and therefore they were in the majority.

God worked for their good in seemingly impossible situations and brought them into marvelous blessings. And then you may say again, and as you're sitting there this morning, yes, that's fine. I read my Bible. I can understand that. I can see that. And I recognize that God was for them in the Bible. I recognize that God was with Gideon. I recognize God was for David and all those sort of things.

But, what about me today? I'm in the 21st century. I'm not in the Bible times. Is God for me? What has God done that removes from my doubts and my fears that God is not for me?

What is it that convinces me and assures me that God is for me and that no matter what I face, that He is greater?

[25 : 10] What evidence is there that God is for us Christians in 21st century Whitby? Well, then we just need to look back here, don't we, in Romans chapter 8.

Because the verse previous to verse 31 is the reason why Paul says, what can we say in response to these things? What are the things that he responds to with the reality, if God is for us, who can be against us?

And remember that word, if there is, as we use it in the word, since, since God is for us. In other words, we say to somebody, if you're going down the shops, can you collect some milk?

In other words, since you're going down the shops, not that you might not be going down the shops, you've said, I'm going down the shops, or if you're going to the shops, and so on. It's since, it's a certainty. If God is for us, who can be against us?

The reality of what God has done for us, believers, in verse 30, is what moves Paul to declare this truth. He is for us. And if you're a believer this morning, if you're a Christian who's put your faith and trust in Jesus, no matter how you doubt, how you struggle, how you find things hard, the things that God has done for you are indisputable, are definite, are real, and you have experienced them, and they are part of your life, and they're there in verse 30.

[26 : 33] Four things, four truths, four certainties, four actual actions of God for you that prove He is for you. The first one there is He predestined us.

That is, God planned. We talked about the plans of God for His people in Jeremiah. Well, God is a God who plans. He doesn't get caught off guard. He doesn't go into a situation half-cocked. He's a God who plans meticulously, perfectly, because that is His very nature, to be perfect. He planned that we should be on His side. He planned that He should be for us.

Even before you and I were born, He made a choice to bring us to Himself, to deliver us from sin, and to bring us into His family, into His loving kindness.

The very words that He speaks to us in Jeremiah are the words He speaks to us today. The plans I have for you are to do you good, not to harm you, but to give you a future hope and to prosper you. [27 : 38] If you're a Christian, the reason you're a Christian, the reason that God is part of your life is God predestined you. Mystery, marvelous, we can't describe it and put it down in words, but it's there in black and white and it says God chose you.

Done that. No matter who you are, no matter what the world is against you, today, you have been chosen by God. Secondly, he says He also called.

That means that God made Himself known to us. We were previously ignorant of God. We can remember that, perhaps, if we became Christians later in life.

We lived our lives in ignorance of God. We didn't understand who He was. He seemed to be someone distant, far off, unknowable, but there came a point in our lives when God called to us in one way or another.

He took the initiative. He came to us and he called us. None of us can come to God. God must first come to us and that's what He does when He calls us.

[28 : 38] It's what we call an effective, effectual call. When He calls us, He gives us the ability to hear and to respond with faith.

God came looking for you, dear Christian. We're going to look at that particularly next week when we think about the giving of His Son, the Lord Jesus, calling to you when you were lost, calling to you in danger.

God predestined and He called. If you're a Christian this morning, it's because God called you before you called Him. It's because God came looking for you before you went looking for Him. Then He says He also justified. Justified means pardoned. God has pardoned us of our guilt and made us accepted in His sight.

Until we came to God, not only were we ignorant of God, not only were we deaf towards God and dead towards God, not only were we unaware of His choosing or that He was for us, but also we lived our lives in opposition to Him.

[29 : 46] We lived our lives turning away from and ignoring and rejecting His will for our lives, His good and perfect and pleasing law. We were guilty before Him.

In fact, the Bible says strongly that we were under judgment from God. Unless God did something, we would stand before Him in His court of law as lawbreakers and would await sentence and judgment which is forever to be separated from Him.

But God, in calling us to Himself, justified us. He removed our convictions. He wiped the slate clean. He declared us to be righteous in His sight.

He removed the obstacle of sin and all the obstacles of doubt and unbelief of our hearts that we should come and know Him and trust Him. Justified.

If you're a Christian, this morning your sins are wiped away. You are cleared and accepted and precious in the sight of God, not because of something that you've done for God but because of what He has done for you, especially in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[30 : 55] Predestined, called, justified, glorified. What is it to glorify? It means that He has made us beautiful who once were ugly and He's done that in part now.

Every single Christian has become lovely in His sight. Every single Christian has been glorified, beautified by God's grace in our lives and we see that in part, don't we?

If you're a Christian you don't look in the mirror and say, what a lovely, handsome, gorgeous, well I do but you might not, beautiful person I am. No, you look at, you see the changes that God has done.

You see how the heart that was once so bitter and unforgiving and resentful has been softened and there's a love and there's a warmth and there's a care that wasn't there before. It's not perfect, we know we're not that but there's a change.

God is already glorifying you, glorifying us, transforming us but the best is yet to come. Much more besides, He not only has glorified but will glorify.

[32 : 02] We shall be perfect without sin or stain or taint. When we enter His presence in heaven, everything that marks and mires our lives will be gone.

This is how Paul describes us in the future when Jesus comes again. We're told He will present us a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless.

Now all these things God has done for you, dear Christian, they are undeniable, indisputable facts. Therefore, whatever you feel, whatever you think, whatever the circumstances, whoever seems to be against you, the reality is this, God is for you who can be against you.

Do you know that? Are you certain of that? Can you receive God's truth and word by faith, not by sight?

Can you look and recognise and delight in and rest in and rejoice in and have peace in the fact that God is for you?

[33 : 20] But I've been saying all those things to Christians this morning and I know that there are some of you here who are not. Some of you who do not know that God is for you.

Let me ask you, don't you wish that God was for you? After what you've heard? After what has been laid out? Don't you wish and long, oh, that God was for me?

This God who loves, this God who works, this God who plans, this God who is so good, oh, I wish he was for me. Let me say to you that he can be for you and his desire and longing is that he would be for you.

What makes the difference? What makes the difference is simply this. We know that God, in all things, God works for those who love him.

This God is so lovely, so wonderful, so, so, so, how attractive. Don't you, don't you long that you could be part of his world, part of his kingdom, part of his family?

[34 : 31] Then, dear friend, let me urge you, let me encourage you as you've seen this God, this wonderful, lovely God displayed to you in the Word this morning, then surely lend your heart, say, Lord, I want you to be for me.

Come and be my God. See, that's the big problem, isn't it? The reason why God is for us and for many people there is not the experience of God for them is because they are the gods of their lives. And if you're not a Christian, whether you recognize or not, you are the God of your life. You're the one who calls the shots. You're the one who makes the choices. You're the one who's in control, at least you think so. Haven't you recognized by now that you are not in control of your life, that all your plans, all your hopes, all your dreams, more often than not, just fall apart in your hands?

Call upon God who has called you. He's calling you this morning through me and through his word. Come to me. Ask of me. Lord, be my God. Take your rightful place in my life that I may know these things, that I may know that God is for me.

Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[35 : 54] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. How poorly we view you, oh Lord. How dimly we see you. You are for us.

But how often that truth is hidden behind our problems and fears. Hidden behind the mounting hoards of people and things that seem to be against us. If only we would say, O Lord, that you are so great and so big and so awesome that were the whole world against us, the whole universe against us. All these things are as a drop in the bucket. All these things are minuscule, tiny in comparison to the everlasting and infinite God. O Lord, we ask first of all for those of us who are believers this morning who feel, think, or even believe that the world is against us. O Lord, grant us again that renewed faith, that encouragement and assurance that God is for us in every sense of the way, even beyond our imagination. And we ask for those, Lord, of us here this morning, or I can't say that really, for those of them here this morning, who God is not for, because they still insist upon being the God of their lives. How can they compare to you? How can anyone compare to you? What foolishness to have any other God ruling over our lives other than the Lord God Almighty? And I pray, Lord, I pray, and we pray for those who still do not know that God is for them, that even this day you would so call them to yourself, so draw them to yourself, so dethrone them from their own hearts, that you might take your rightful place as they come to you in repentance for sin and faith and trust for your love.

Hear us as we ask these things. We ask them all in Jesus' name. Amen. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 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. Amen.