

IF GOD IS FOR US...
Romans 8:26-39
Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri
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LISTEN: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/if-god-is-for-us/>

For those of you who like to write in the margins of your Bibles who preached a particular text when, you will note I have preached many times from this text. I plead guilty as charged! In fact, last spring, during Lent, we explored this from another angle, emphasizing other verses. This morning, we focus on v. 31: “If God is for us...”

Like an attorney making his case, he keeps repeating the word “who.” He sounds like an owl! Who can be against us? Who can charge God’s chosen ones with anything? Who can condemn us? Who will separate us from God’s love? Paul was writing to believers who were surrounded by the tyranny of the Roman Empire, dog-eat-dog policies, hatred and cruelty. Followers of Jesus noticed that their values were not the values of the Empire. On top of that, they all the worries we have related to family, finances, health and survival. And they must have been flagging in strength. Paul indicates they had given up on prayer (vv. 26-27). Like us, they thought they were strong Christians, until some trouble came along and wiped off that thin veneer of faith. Does it ever embarrass you? It does me. I think I’m strong in the Lord, and then a crisis comes and I am exposed as immature spiritually. Worrying rather than trusting God.

Many of you will recognize the name of Corrie Ten Boom, the Dutch Christian who secretly hid Jews in her home as Hitler began his reign of terror across Europe in the late 1930’s and early 40’s. She was placed in a German death camp but somehow survived to tell her story. She once wrote: “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, but it empties today of strength.”

Now think with me. What is the bench mark for God’s power to deliver and make good on God’s word? Well, in the Hebrew scriptures, it was the Exodus and later the Exile. If God can do that, God can surely take care of our smaller problems. But now, Paul says, the Cross and the resurrection are the bench marks. Arguing from the greater to the lesser, he says this: If God poured out his Son, if Christ died, if he was raised, if he ascended and if he is our priest always praying for us (vv. 32-34), why are we sweating the small stuff? If God can keep the planets and the sun in right relationship, and can forgive our sins and turn death into a doorway, why would we doubt God’s power to help us with daily struggles? If God is for us, who can be against us?

I loved the scene in the Tom Hanks movie, “Bridge of Spies,” when an exasperated lawyer, played by Hanks, asks this unusually calm Russian spy, accused of espionage, “Don’t you ever worry?” The spy looks at him and replies, “Would it help?” Would it? The biggest problem with worry is that it takes up space in our spiritual hard drive—space that could be used to experience God. We are so busy anticipating the worst that we have no energy left or space remaining to trust the Triune God—Father, Son and Spirit (all referenced in this text) [I’m indebted to Marva Dawn for this thought, *Being Well When We Are Ill*, p. 152].

But Paul doesn’t use the word worry in this text (he does in Philippians 4). He flips it and shows us the positive side—assurance. That’s not a word Baptist use as much as we used to. Because

when we say it, people are turned off, thinking we are bragging. But we are only bragging on God. Assurance! Notice that Paul does not say, “We WILL be conquerors.” He says, “We ARE more than conquerors...” (v. 37). Now. It is a present reality. Tell me this. Who is more safe than one kept by God? And who is in more danger than one who tries to build a fragile tent of self-salvation?.

After 9-11, the state fortified the security around our Capitol, and built the guard station on the east side of the Capitol, which I drive by hundreds of times. It so happened that I performed the wedding of a young man who worked as a guard there in that guard room. On Sunday mornings, about 6:45am, we had this ritual. I would drive around the Capitol and we would wave. “Hi, Brandon!” Somehow it’s more comforting. The guard knows my name! And I know his! We have a relationship.

What if today, you would peel back the layers of worry that are coating your life, and one by one give them to the Lord? I mean really, really hand them over, one at a time, into God’s great big, caring hands. If God is for us, who can be against us? And has you place those items in God’s hands, you will hear God whisper, “I’ve got this! Trust me!”