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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
February 21, 2021  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Genesis22:1-14, Pasion History – Upper Room  
Hymns: 358:1-4; 148:1-5; 375:1-3; 309:1

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Romans 8:31-39

What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can* be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:

“For Your sake we are killed all day long;  
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: If God is For Us who can be against Us?

Is God for Us? Are you absolutely certain that God is always 100% on our side? John 3:16 records that great truth that lies at the heart of the gospel, and so also at the heart of our Lenten season. God gave His only begotten Son! It of course begs the question, "Why?" and we need to look in two directions for a full answer to that not so simple question. First let's look to the heart of God and seek the answer to that question. Why would God do this for a world of rebellious recalcitrant sinners? The answer is obviously **not** found within the heart of man, but rather within the heart of God. "*He so loved the world!*" The picture on our bulletin cover reminds us of the fact that this began with the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus was and is the eternal Son of God, but He took upon Himself our flesh and blood, being born of the Virgin Mary so that He might be given into death. That death included the complete and total forsakenness of God; that death which was absolutely foreign to the nature of God; that death which brought Jesus' body into the grave. That is a great love indeed! With absolute certainty we by faith can lay hold to the assertion that God is for us! "*He ... did not Spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for as all!*" (v.32)

Now the Spirit leads us in the other direction with the answer to the question "Why?"

**THEME: He Did Not Spare His Own Son So That:**

Paul finishes that statement with the concept of God freely giving us all things. It is most certainly true that God freely gives us all things. Our minds, being that we are attached so closely to this material world, race first and foremost, (it is actually sad that it is not only first, but also foremost) to the material blessings for this temporal life. The Holy Spirit's focus in these words of our text is on the higher blessings of our spiritual and eternal needs. God spared not His own Son so that He might freely give us all these things necessary for spiritual and eternal life. The first has to do with true righteousness. God spared not His own Son so that --

**I. No One Can Bring a Charge Against Us.**

There are a couple of sources for very vigorous accusations toward us, and I mean toward us *who believe*. One is the devil. The devil

is our primary accuser! He relishes the idea of setting us up so that he is able to point the accusing finger at us with the hopes of leading us to despair.

That is the devil's objective in tempting us to sin, to bringing us all those rationalizations for why the sin that lies before us is understandable and not so bad; so that he can turn right around and accuse of being terrible sinners. His goal is to deceive us, and then leave us in abject despair over our sins. He will try his very best to lead us to believe that we are no longer worthy of Christ's love and forgiveness.

That argument has a lot of truth in it, because we never were worthy of God's love and forgiveness. It comes to us by grace, not merit! Think of how the devil worked on Judas with Judas' love of money. Somehow the devil convinced Judas that it wasn't really all that bad to betray Jesus and turn Jesus over to His enemies. Perhaps the devil had Judas recall those times he had seen Jesus walk right through the midst of His enemies and they were powerless to stop Him. Perhaps Judas' was simply blinded to the reality of his sin by the thought of all that silver! But once the deed was done and Judas saw that Jesus' was condemned, Judas was not only remorseful, but he also despaired! His end was tragic. In our Passion History we read Jesus' words saying it would have been better if he had not been born! The devil accused, and Judas despaired of God's love and forgiveness. The devil will strive to do that with us also.

The answer is found in the gospel message of our text. *God "did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."* (v. 32) So then, when the great Accuser shouts out those accusations, the answer is found in the cross where the Lord has laid on Him (on Jesus) the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6) Our text declares: "*It is God who justifies.*"<sup>34</sup> *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."* (v.33-34)

Did you hear that? There is no one else left to condemn us because God has given all judgment to His Son, and Jesus, who died for us and rose again, is the One who makes intercession for us before the throne of God!

Not only does that silence the accusations of the devil, it silences our own conscience! As long as we live on this earth we will have remnants of the old way of thinking, that we have to be good in order to enter heaven. Indeed, our old man will bring this argument up time and again, because it is easy for us to get confused. We know that as children of God we need to fight against the sin in our lives. We also know that we give in to our sinful desires because of the weakness of our flesh. What results is what Paul wrote earlier in this epistle. *“When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,<sup>15</sup> who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.”*

(Romans 2: 14-15)

Yes, we experience the same accusations or lame excuses relating to our sinful behavior. Many Christians torture their souls because we fail to recall the truth Paul stated in the opening verse of this 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans. *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”* (Romans 8:1)

**No condemnation!** Do you still hear your conscience talking back? Then silence it with these words of John’s first epistle, *“If our heart condemns us, **God is greater than our heart**, and knows all things.<sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.”* (1 John 3:20-21)

God is greater than your heart. In the greatness of His love He did not spare His own Son. He gave His Son into death as the atoning sacrifice for your sin. God is greater than your heart! Believe it, and know the peace that comes from having confidence in God. God did not spare His own Son so that you and I might know the peace of the forgiveness of sins!

That brings us right where the Lord wants us to be, under the umbrella of His love and grace. God did not spare His own Son so that --

## **II. Nothing Is Able to Separate Us from God's Love!**

**Romans 8: 35-39** “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Let's break this in half. Looking at the first part we see listed the forces and the trials of this world which we experience in this life. Trouble, sickness, persecution (be it ridicule or violence), these pressures experienced by children of God cannot bring us to forsake the Lord. They certainly cannot hinder the Lord from coming to us with His love and grace! Paul quotes a psalm verse that states clearly that children of God are marked by the world for persecution. If you read through the CLC Missions prayer list for February you will see how common it is for children of God to suffer for the sake of Jesus' name. We should not consider it strange if that comes to us in our lives. (1 Peter 4:12) But that in no way indicates that God has abandoned us to the forces of evil. IN NO WAY! Paul asserts the opposite. “*In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*” (v.37)

**More than conquerors** over the trials and tribulation of this life!  
**More than conquerors** over the world and any pressure they might bring!  
**More than conquerors** even in the face of the sword, which was used to end Apostle Paul's life. The world cannot see beyond the grave. We know we have eternal life through faith in Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, who died for us and rose again! In Jesus we have the victory over any and all created things!

He spared not His own Son, but delivered Jesus up for us so that we might be persuaded of the depth and permanence of God's love toward us. This love is so great, this love is so infinite that nothing in all creation can separate us from that love of God in Christ Jesus! Paul was **persuaded**, absolutely convinced of that.

That is the conviction of faith the Holy Spirit would have us hold in our hearts also. That conviction of faith grows deeper as we contemplate the wonders of the gospel. In this Lenten season as we meditate upon the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ the Spirit shall impress upon our hearts the depth of Jesus' love for us fallen sinners, and the expanse of His grace that envelops us.

“What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this That caused the Lord of bliss

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!” (Worship Supplement 2000: 723)

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.