

Romans 8:31-39¹ - If God...Then What?
Todd Misfeldt
West Valley Presbyterian Church

V5

Romans 8:31-39 (NIV) - **More Than Conquerors**

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² 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? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ 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. (NIV)

¹ Unless otherwise specified, all scripture is from *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

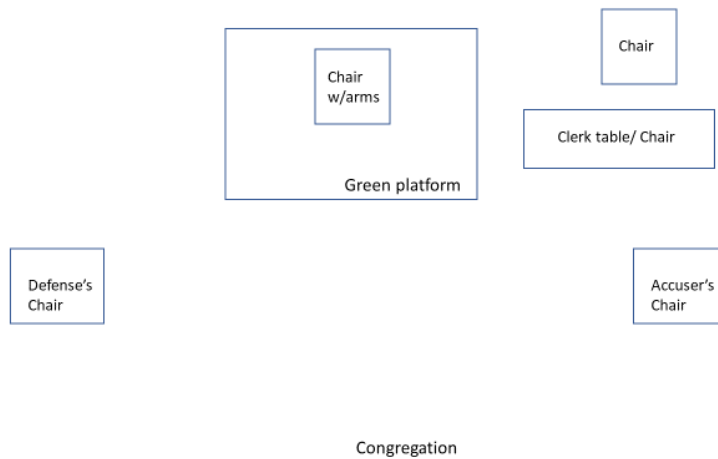
Introduction

Romans

- Paul was trained as a Pharisee in the laws given by God.
- We can tell by the questions asked by the Pharisees in the Gospels, that they thought like lawyers.
- In the Book of Romans, when Paul, a former Pharisee, lays out his best argument for the Christian faith,
 - He pulls out all the stops to explain Christianity as thoroughly and as logically as he can.
 - Paul's background as a Pharisee shows through in the way that he makes his legal like arguments.
- Most of us are not creatures of the Law in the same way that a 1st Century Pharisee was. It is easy for us to gloss over the legal language and arguments that Paul uses.
- However, we don't do justice to Paul's argument when we do this.
- In the passage that Becky just read, Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions.
- I want to dive deeper into these questions in a form that Paul would have been familiar with—a trial.
 - "The purpose of a trial is to reveal what is genuine, to prove what is true and expose what is false."²
- Paul wants to demonstrate that Christianity is genuine.
- To assist me, I've asked some of the lawyers in our congregation to assist me.
- [Donna, Kevin, and Mike come up to the platform]

2 Leland Ryken et al., [*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 891.

The Setting



- Imagine a first century court.
[[slide]]



- Somewhat similar to this painting of *Trial of the Apostle Paul* by Nikolai K Bodarevsky in which shows Saint Paul explaining Christianity to King Herod Agrippa.
- In our case, we are in the highest court of all creation.
- We are in Almighty God's court.
- There would be a judge.
 - Here, picture God sitting in this chair (center of the chancel).

- The question to be decided is whether or not what Paul says in Romans 8:31-39 is true.

- For that we need a prosecutor or an accuser, who challenges what Paul's says. The accuser will argue that what Paul is saying is not true.
 - This character is played by Kevin.

- Next, we need a defense. Paul was well schooled and accomplished. Paul will give his own defense.
 - Paul is played by Mike and will be seated on your left.

- Lastly, we have a court scribe (clerk) who will read the evidence already on the record.
 - The court scribe will be played by Donna.
 - The Scribe will be seated next to the judge's chair.

Opening arguments

[[slide]]

Narrator

- Let us begin the trial with opening statements. First the accuser.

Accuser

- Your honor. We are all privileged to be here in the presence of our Lord Almighty, who deserves all of our praise and who has all authority, power, and wisdom.
- This Paul says that creation itself has been frustrated and is currently in bondage to decay because of these same humans that Paul champions.
- Will the scribe read Genesis 3:2-3,6-7

Scribe

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,
³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ”

...

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Genesis 3:2-3,6-7)

Accuser

- All of creation was wisely cursed by God almighty because of humanity’s actions. God’s word is the law. Humanity is condemned.
- How can Paul be so bold as to argue that this same humanity has any hope.
- Humanity has already been condemned.
- Who is this Paul who can contradict God’s judgement?
- I will prove that Paul is wrong and that humanity has no hope because they already stand condemned.

Paul

- My God, I am a servant of Your Son Christ Jesus and who has been set apart for Your Gospel.³
- I acknowledge that humanity is controlled by sin and is condemned under the law.
- I will demonstrate that it is through Jesus that the impossible has been done.
- Will the scribe read my previous statement in Romans 8:1–3.

[[slide]]

Scribe

¹So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. God condemned sin in the body by sending his own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin. (Romans 8:1–3)

³ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 1:1.

God's Condemnation

[[slide]]

Narrator

- Now we begin the trial with the accusation that humanity is condemned by God.

Accuser

- Your Honor. Paul has admitted that humanity is condemned by God's law.
- God is against humanity, what further argument is needed?
- Surely Paul does not think that he is above God's law?
- Would the scribe read Paul's statement in [Romans 8:7–8](#).

Scribe

⁷The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.
(Romans 8:7–8)

Paul

- Gracious God. It is true that the flesh is weak and is rightly condemned by the law. I have acknowledged this.
- However, not only is humanity weak, but the law is also weak when compared to You, our God. I say:

³¹... If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² 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?" (Romans 8:31–32)
- Where God allowed Abraham to spare his son, Isaac, God did not spare His own son.⁴
- The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's own Son, demonstrates that God is for us, not against us. God held nothing back for us, not even His own Son.
- As I've said earlier, it is through Jesus, God's son, that we have been set free from the law of sin and death. ([Romans 8:1–2](#))

⁴ Genesis 22:12 – ¹²“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

Accuser

- Paul himself admits that humanity is condemned! The law is the law and Paul cannot change it.

Paul

- Yes, we are subject to the Law and have been condemned. However, we have an advocate.
- Will the Scribe please read the testimony of the Apostle John given in 1 John 2:1–2?

Scribe

¹...But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1–2)

Narrator

- Jesus has already paid the price for our condemnation and Jesus will hold nothing back for us. If we are in Christ, we cannot be condemned.

[[slide]]

- If God is for us, who can be against us?
 - Nobody.

Charges - Subject to the Law

[[slide]]

Narrator

- Now for the question about whether Christian subject to the law?

Accuser

- Very well, Jesus Christ is an advocate for these people.
- However, they are still subject to the requirements of the Law.
- Does Paul, or should we say Saul, think that he can fool the law by a wave of his hand or as easily as he changed his name?

Paul

- Almighty God, it is true that on our own, we cannot satisfy the requirements of the law.
- However, I do not claim that on our own we can make the law so weak that it does not apply to us.
- Independently, we are lost. We need help and we receive that help through the Spirit of God.
² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you (us) free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2)
- ²⁶ ... 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. ²⁷ 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. (Romans 8:26–27)
- In conclusion, we do not become acceptable to God on our own but it is God Himself who does this.
³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. (Romans 8:32–33)

Narrator

[[slide]]

- If we are justified or made right by God, who then can bring a higher charge against us? (Romans 8:32–33)

- Nobody

Earthly Condemnation

[[slide]]

Narrator

- Can we be condemned earthly authorities?

Accuser

- Your honor, I have other witnesses who will condemn these Christians. They have been condemned by the Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Romans. All the earthly authorities have legally condemned them for treason and sedition.
- Paul himself should be condemned as a hypocrite, someone who has turned his back upon his Pharisee teachers and mentors.

Paul

- Will the scribe read from the testimony of Mark 1:9–11.

Scribe:

⁹At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:9–11)

Paul

- This same Jesus, who God has acknowledged as His son, was condemned by the Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Romans. All the earthly authorities have condemned Jesus for treason and sedition.
- What weight does their ruling have against God’s own Son? None. They are inferior authorities.
- What about these Christians, people who follow Jesus? I say
¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you (them) free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1–2)
- If a person is a follower of Christ, they have been pardoned and set free through Jesus Christ.

Narrator

[[slide]]

- The accuser asks: [Who on earth condemns?](#)

- No one. (Romans 8:34)

Separation from Christ

[[slide]]

Narrator

- Is there a power that can separate us from Christ?

Accuser

- Your Honor. We acknowledge that You have claimed Jesus Christ as your Son.
- We acknowledge that through Jesus Christ and the Spirit, humans can be set free from the law of sin and death.
- However, we have seen that humanity is fickle, just as Paul is. Humanity could not keep just one little commandment in the Garden of Eden.
- How can any of them remain with Christ in the face of trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
- They will not. They will submit to their own selfish desires for self-preservation.

Paul

- I acknowledge that we are weak. However, “the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Romans 8:26).
- It is through the Spirit that God can work in us.
- Will the Scribe please read my statement of Romans 8:28-30.

Scribe

²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Romans 8:28–30)

Paul

- It is not through our own strength but through God's strength and His call to us, that we can remain with Christ.
- I disagree that the burdens mentioned by my foe will cause a Christian to separate from their call.
- I, Paul, have faced all of these things and it has not shaken my faith. Because of my experience I can say:
³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ 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. (Romans 8:37–39)
- The burdens that a Christian face are not new and will not cause them to falter. Suffering, even death for a Christian is not a sign of separation from God or His love, but rather an opportunity to follow Jesus.^{5,6}
- Psalm 44, tells us that when we are suffering for God, we should trust God and not trust our own strength. We should trust God to the point of death.
- Will the scribe please read Psalm 44:22?

Scribe

- ²² Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. (Psalm 44:22)

5 J. Clinton Mccann Jr., "[The Book of Psalms](#)," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. Leander E. Keck; vol. 4; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 4859.

6 See Mark 8:34–35

Paul

- Indeed, ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. (Romans 8:9–10)
- A physical death is not the end. Christian have hope for more because of our relationship with Jesus Christ,

²³ ... we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (Romans 8:23–25)

Narrator

[[slide]]

- ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:35–36)
 - Nobody

Summary

- That is Paul's case to demonstrate that Christianity is genuine and that what he says in Romans 8:31-39 is true.
- Thank you, Donna, Kevin, and Mike.
[Donna, Kevin, and Mike leave the platform]
- Paul had to get beyond the Law.
- As a Pharisee, Paul had been a faithful follower of God's will but he had been stuck in humanity's interpretation of what God said. Humanity had codified into 613 laws what God wanted
 - and by extension what we could do to satisfy the law.
 - That was the game the Pharisees played.
- The Pharisees are not the only one who falls into this trap. We do the same thing at times.
- We profess our faith in God
 - but our faith is really in following what we can do to meet our expectations of what God wants.
- This we can't do on our own and we will fail at it.
- If we try and do it on our own, then all of the accuser's accusations are true!
 - We are condemned.
- When Paul found Jesus, Paul was changed.
- Paul's comfort was no longer in what he could do to obey the laws, but in what God/Jesus did to satisfy the law for him.
- If we really acknowledge who God is and how little we can do for ourselves,
 - then we let go of our will. We can let our will 'die'.

- Because it is God who makes us OK in His eyes. There is no condemnation for us to overcome, even our own self condemnation.

- But God does more than satisfy the Law, He goes beyond the Law.
 - He will raise us up to Christ so that we might share in what Jesus did.

- In Jesus we have hope of our own resurrection
 - so that we have no fear of death.

- We can die every day because
- we will live in Christ today,
- we will be with Christ tomorrow, and
- we will share in Christ's glory forever.

- Dear friends, this is something that flesh on its own can't do.
- However, in Christ, we are truly "more than conquerors".

Closing

- I encourage everyone to read all of Romans 8 this week. Read it multiple times. Ponder Paul's argument of vv. 38-39. Is there anyone or anything that³⁹ ... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord?
- [[slide]]
- No, because if we are in Christ, then God is for us.
- From this everything else hangs.
- Are you convinced of this or is there some doubt in your mind?
Are you still trying to do it yourself, to satisfy the law on your own?
- If so, pray and renew your faith and the Holy Spirit will help put aside anything that can separate you from Christ.
- If we are in Christ, who shall separate us from Him?
- Nobody.
- Let us pray.

Prayer

Dear God

- We thank You for Your law, which guides us on how to behave according to Your will.
- However, we also acknowledge our ability to distort Your will and reshape it to our own desire.
- We confess that we want to make ourselves acceptable to You by our own efforts.
 - This we cannot do on our own.
- It is only through Your Spirit
 - that we can come to You.
- It is only through Your Spirit
 - That we might be spared condemnation
- It is only through Your Spirit
 - That no-one can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.
- It is only through Jesus Christ
 - that we can be more than conquerors of anyone and anything who are against us.
- We thank You God for your unfailing love.

Amen