

*If God is for us, who can be against us... (Romans 8:31)*

During the summer, the epistle readings in our lectionary take us through Paul's letter to the Christians at Rome. Romans is one of the greatest books in the Bible, if I can say it that way. Over 16 chapters, Paul lays out the basics of what Christian teaching is. He moves from the Word of God convicting the world of sin, to the redemption that comes only through faith in Jesus Christ, to the truth and reality that nothing can separate us from the love of God for those of us who believe in Jesus.

It's that last point that we'll hear in July. In some of Paul's most famous words from his most famous letter, he writes, *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 with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure 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 (Romans 8:31–39).*

The truth is that there are, in fact, many dangers in this world. There are the dangers that all human beings face: sickness, need, poverty, violence, and, of course, death. Though we all face those, we Christians may add any number of other dangers that we face simply because of our faith. Just as Jesus was rejected, so too will we be rejected. Just as Jesus was mocked, so too will we be mocked. Just as Jesus was persecuted, so too will we be persecuted. And, as Jesus died, it may be that we could die for our faith.

Left alone, these words could drive us to despair. But, God never leaves his people in despair. For, just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so too will he raise us (8:23). Just as Jesus began a new creation, so too will the whole creation be made new (8:22). Our faith is not simply some list of doctrines for us to recite. Our faith is in the one who has overcome every danger of body and soul. Jesus is victorious over it all. And because of that, *nothing* can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nor is this only a promise for the future. Whatever we have gone through, Jesus has also gone through. Even more, in our afflictions, he promises to be with us always (Matthew 28:20). That is, in fact, our hope for eternal life – to be with Jesus, safe from harm! May we cling to those words and promises, both now and forever!

-Pastor Squire

“As true as God's own Word is true, not earth nor hell's satanic crew against us shall prevail. Their might? A joke, a mere façade! God is with us and we with God – our victory cannot fail.”

(“O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe,” *LSB 666*, v. 3)