Romans 8:31-39 (Walter Potter) 139535

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 13 (8:31-39)

God for UsRomans 8:31-39

To what pains and what cost God has gone to show us the truth of those five words: "If God be for us." How deeply rooted in our very nature is the opposite of that truth. Who is there—until born again, until they have partaken of the new nature—that knows "God is for us" or that believes "God is for us"? Satan in that scene of perfect human happiness and bliss ruined all by leading Adam and Eve to believe that their Creator was not good, that He was withholding something from them.

Here it is not the Father; it is not the Saviour; it is not the Lord; but it is "If God be for us, who can be against us?" What is there in the world to tell us that "God is for us"? God does not call our attention to anything in the world, but to the fact that He gave His Son, and as soon as that fact is received, the mischief is all undone to those who receive it.

Sometimes one is led to say to a patient in the hospital, "We do not come here to look for the love of God." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). It is a challenge: If God be for us, who can be against us? How are we to know that God is for us? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." The "us" is not limited; it is addressed to all. "God so loved the world," so we can say to the sinner, "God loves you." "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We have to test every seemingly adverse circumstance with this challenge. Satan takes advantage of our circumstances to make us question the love and wisdom of God. There stands the unchanging evidence.

The us comes in in a different way in 1 John 4:16: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Some of the "us" have known and believed it, and some have not. It is because of the absolute character of His love that we have God here instead of the Father. It is God in His own being and nature, not in relationship; as soon as you get the Father, it is relationship. We have "the Son" three times in the chapter, twice as "His own Son" and once simply as "His Son."

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son." Verse 3. "He that spared not His own Son." Verse 32. That is important. It is what the Son is: God's beloved Son.

"He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Verse 29. That is dignity.

We get the counsels of God here:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

"Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (verses 28-31)

Then in verse 33 we have another point: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." God's people are an elect people—of His choosing. Just as soon as He brings in the sovereignty of God and election, He brings in the question of justification. God's people are not only elect, but they are a justified people. God has justified them, that is, cleared them righteously. No charge can be laid against one who is justified. That is the basis of a soul's peace with God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). We know how watchful Satan is; he is ever ready to find fault.

We get the highest tribunal, the highest court, here; God is the Justifier. We cannot be at peace without the knowledge of justification. The cross and death of Christ have their origin in the love of God. Justification is the means by which God brings us into relationship with Himself according to His own purposes.

God had to shut the mouth of that accuser:

"The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:10, 11).

There is no progress into the truth of our heavenly position until the truth of justification is known. It seems to be God's order of things. In Israel's history they could not enter the land until they went through the Jordan, until their redemption was accomplished. If I cannot believe the simple Word of God as to my sins, surely I cannot receive into my heart the truth of the heavenly position and the truth of the church. The individual question must be settled first. Consequently Romans comes before Corinthians. Romans is individual. The relationship of the church to God and to Christ is a corporate thing—a corporate relationship. "And are of the household of God." Members of the body of Christ.

Each knows Christ as Saviour for himself first, and each knows God as Father personally.

"Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

All judgment is committed into His hands. He is the very One who died for us, died for our sins. "Yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

The Judge of all men, the One into whose hands all judgment is committed because He is the Son of man, is the One that died for all men. In that way all who know Him as the One who died for them know Him as the One who has justified them. "Risen again"—the resurrection is the proof that the sacrifice has been accepted. We sometimes illustrate it this way: Christ paid the debt, and the resurrection is God's receipt for the payment. Do not look inside for the evidence. God in mercy turns our eyes in on ourselves and in that way leads to repentance. When the work is done, He says never look there again. That is why we get the exhortation in Hebrews 12: Looking off unto Jesus the Beginner and Completer of faith. Look away from all that crowd of witnesses who obtained a good report through faith; not one of them was perfect; all missed the path at some time; look away from them unto the One who has never missed the path, JESUS. He was the Man of faith in the path of faith and was sustained in that path by the joy that was set before Him. He "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." He was the dependent Man, sustained day by day. He kept His eye on the end.

"The joy that was set before Him" was the joy of getting back where He was before, after having done all that God gave Him to do on earth. It was the joy of getting back to that place in a new glory, an acquired glory. He sits there as an Overcomer. "Even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21).

We might call attention to Hebrews 1:3:

"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

He was just as perfect in His humanity as in Deity— the One who made the world and the One who saved it. It is not the application here, but the thing itself. "When He had by Himself purged our sins"—made purgation for sin. He, "For the joy that was set before Him endured the cross," as a Man of faith overcoming all obstacles.

God has His purposes—His ways. Those ways are always consistent with His nature and character.

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10).

He is going to do it consistently with His nature. When these many sons are brought to glory, we are going to be among them. Everyone will be suited to His nature and character. If we have His purposes, we have His ways in doing it. God never loses sight for a moment of what is suited to His character, and nothing can abide in His presence that is not suited to that character and nature. How is it that no one can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? They are justified. Christ has died; and the very One into whose hands all judgment is committed is their Saviour. That is a wonderful verse in hymn 331 of the Hymns for the Little Flock hymnbook:

We learn from the Word of God that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; and then we learn it experimentally, for if anything could separate us from God's love, it would be our ways. It was to Jacob God said, "I will not leave thee" (Genesis 28:15), not to Abraham nor Isaac. Jacob was a crooked man, a man of self- reliance despite the promises of God. We get the expression "God of Jacob" over one hundred times. Jacob could not turn His love from him. That is what we prove in our experience. If anything could change "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus" my ways would do it. There is nothing that can do it: "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature;" nothing in time nor eternity, nothing in hell.

The faithfulness of this love of God leads Him not to give us up because of our ways but to use our ways for our chastisement and profit.

When we get the subject of chastening in Hebrews, Christ is left out altogether because He was never under the Father's chastening hand. He had no will to subdue, but we have. Nothing can stop this love. In John 13:1 we read, "He loved them unto the end." In the 13th of Hebrews we read "Let brotherly love continue." His love never changes and our love to the brethren is to continue in spite of circumstances: "By love serve one another." When trials come in between brethren, do not let the love pass away, let it continue. You may have to walk away from your brother, but let love continue. It may cause a heavy heart. Brotherly love gives one who has it in that way a heavy heart. "Brotherly kindness" (2 Peter 1:7) is shown in our acts; love is the source. It is divine love that leads to brotherly kindness; otherwise we might have the acts and love would not be the source at all.

We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. What are our present circumstances? "We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter"—a path of suffering; but "in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." If we lose the sense of the love of God in our souls, we get discouraged and the enemy gets in. "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). It is very difficult to keep the heart in the love of God. As soon as the sense of God's love is gone, weakness and despair ensue.

Look at Hebrews 12:12: "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." "Hands which hang down" is a figure of discouragement. Satan takes advantage of that; the result is "feeble knees." These two go together. One of Satan's ways with God's people is to discourage them. See how he tried it with the Lord in Gethsemane. Instead of being discouraged, faith in the midst of the circumstances strengthened Him. If you go to visit a saint and find him all discouraged, there is no end to the difficulties. He has to be lifted up. You seek to lift up the hands that have

fallen down by encouraging the brother or sister. "Exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaehing." You get one saying, "I was so discouraged and so and so came in," or "I picked up a tract and read it." Some are very easily discouraged.

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" That is faith's challenge to circumstances.

God always strengthens us by something in His Word; He brings His Word to our minds. "Let Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth continually preserve me." In Scripture, prayer and the Word of God go together. "Sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:5). "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4). They go together.

"He that searcheth the hearts knoweth . . . the mind of the Spirit," not my mind. He that searcheth the heart is guided by the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit is so linked up with the Christian in the 8th of Romans that He makes intercession accordingly. That is a comfort for us in our weakness. The sympathy of the Holy Spirit is very largely lost sight of. He enters into the circumstances of the saints; He dwells with every believer. Here is one so burdened he does not know how to give expression, does not know what to ask as he should or how he ought. The Spirit comes in in all that state of infirmity and takes up what causes him to groan and gives expression to it and brings down the suited blessing.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." That shows the sympathetic intercession of the Holy Spirit. The "love" of the Spirit is found only in Romans. "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (vs. 37).

In 1 Corinthians 2:9 we read, "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." There it is our love to God. God has a people in this world that He speaks of as those that love Him. That is true of all His people; the measure is another thing. There are only five passages where Scripture speaks of our love to God. They are: "We love Him, because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19, "All things work together for good to them that love God" Romans 8:28, and 1 Corinthians 2:9 quoted above, James 1:12 and James 2:5.

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