

## Written Copy: Romans 8:31-34 “For You or Against You?”

17<sup>th</sup> Sunday @ Pentecost: LWML Sunday

Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

### Text: Romans 8:31-34

<sup>31</sup> 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 gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> 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.

### The text's intent

Demonstrate all the ways and reasons we can have faith that God is for us. He sends His Spirit to intercede with us prayerfully in our weakness and groanings. All things good or bad actually work for the good of God's express purpose that all His chosen are called to faith and kept in faith until life everlasting. He selected and called them; He gave them His Son through whose death and resurrection declares us acquitted of all charges of sin before Him and from whom we receive the robe of righteousness that He earned by His perfect life. If the One who will judge all humankind on the Last Day has done all this for me, then there is no one else who can judge me worthy everlasting condemnation. His love has been poured into my heart by faith and no person or anything in this world or in the spiritual world can separate me from that love. It overpowers even the internal distress I suffer through temptation along with the forces in the world and the devil who work to cancel it out. Nothing can separate me from His love and faith in Him.

### Focus Statement:

Through our faith in Jesus Christ the Father gives the definitive answer as to how much He is for you. He chose you before the world began, He called you to faith, giving His Only Son over to suffering and death so that you would be given the ultimate victory over sin, death and the devil. This very Son who will judge the world on the Last Day has earned for you acquittal of all your sins and given you a right standing before the Father, with credit for perfect life. His Spirit comes alongside you in your groaning with sin and the world to intercede in prayer. And Christ intercedes with continued forgiveness from the ruling position over the universe. Through His gift of faith, He gives you His love, and nothing in heaven or on earth can separate you from it.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

The things going on in the world today, in nature, in politics, our struggles with sin and guilt, all work on our mind to make us question if God is truly for us, or maybe has grown tired of us

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

Live in the confidence of faith that God is more than in your corner, He is fighting for you, so that you remain ready for His return, and by your life witness as He works all things for His eternal purpose be the means to call and keep those around you in faith.

**Subject Sentence: Through Christ God is completely and eternally for you**

## **Introduction: Hands Reaching Out-For and Against**

There is nothing like seeing hands reaching out in love toward another. Like the hand of a father or mother reaching down to a toddler, and seeing that child grab a hold of the parent's finger, as they walk together at the zoo, both off to discover new wonders together. Or hands that reach out in help and assistance in times of need. When I was a preteen in Boy Scouts my parents took us to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. It sits on 140,000 acres of wilderness where a young boy or girl can camp, hike, fish, and explore nature while learning and earning merit badges for all kinds of outdoor skills. The group I was with set up base camp in the mountains, and then we would set out on day long journeys exploring. And for the most part it was a blast. It was warm, yet breezy. You could hear the wind in the trees, hear and see eagles and hawks flying about. And the scenery up in the mountains was breathtaking. And even more so for me at one point. We were climbing up the mountain and there was an outcropping that was a rather steep climb that our leader wanted us to head up. I started out OK, but then my fear of heights took over and I froze when I was near the top. I was too afraid to go up or down. Then a hand reached out. It was the hand of one of the young adults that served as our guides. He reached down, grabbed my hand. I expected he would be laughing or making fun of me. But he gently pulled me onward and assured me it would be OK, that he would not let me go. In a few steps I reached the summit. And the view was simply breathtaking. But then there was the trip back down. It was rather steep, especially for me with my fear of heights. But that same young adult grabbed hold of my belt loop and told me to slide down slowly, that he had a firm hold of me and would keep me from falling. And he did. But the sliding on that rough rock meant the seat of my pants were in shreds at the bottom. It was like a I was wearing a grass skirt and you could see right through it. But when we got back to camp, those same hands that helped me down brought me a new pair of pants so I didn't have to walk around embarrassed.

Of course, sometimes there are hands that are raised in opposition. Hands that tell you that you are not welcome, that you should go away. Hands that are raised in anger, with one digit in that hand extended, expressing the anger another feels about you, whether it is deserved or not. There are hands that do malicious things on purpose, such as when a Major League pitcher uses his hands to throw a ball and hit the batter on purpose, and in turn that batter charges the mound, throwing punches with his hands, as well as all the remaining players from both dugouts. (*Show Video*).

Does it sometimes feel that the hands of the world are raised against you? When you look at all the problems that are going on around us: Hurricane Ian that struck Florida and South Carolina, the wildfires out West, the economy and rising prices, COVID, all seem like hands raised against us. There is the increase in violence, the angry rhetoric of the politicians, the anger that even Christians express against fellow Christians over politics, that are like hands raised against brothers and sisters in Christ. Then there are the sinful thoughts and temptations that flood our minds sometimes. There is doubt as well. When the world raises its hand against us, and our sinful heart accuses us, we may begin to wonder how God feels about us. Is He for us or against us? Is He really in our corner or is has He left us alone to fend for ourselves?

## **How Much God is For Us**

**Romans 8:29-30** <sup>29</sup> **For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.** <sup>30</sup> **And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.**

Paul wants you to know just how much our God is for you. He wanted you, and He accomplished all that was necessary so that you would be His very own. Before you were born, He chose you to be His own precious child. And He worked throughout your life to make sure that you would be His own. He chose you and sent His Spirit into your heart and life in your baptism. You didn't wind up at the font by chance, God working through your parents and the Pastor made sure that through the water and the word you were welcomed into His fold. Through the faith there established by the Gospel message you received all that Jesus Christ won for you in His suffering, death, and resurrection. His suffering and death declare you to be justified: acquitted of all charges of sin. And by that faith you receive credit for the perfect life Jesus lived in your place. He clothes you with splendor giving you His robe of righteousness, glorifying you now, conforming you into the image of His Son, and will complete that work body and soul in the eternity to come. And those of you who wandered away from that faith, His loving and seeking hand reaches back out to you through the Gospel Message to call you back to faith and trust in Jesus Christ. God is more than a helping hand reaching out. He is a saving hand, saving us from eternal death and bringing us into life everlasting.

But what about the sins we still commit? What about the doubts that we have? What about the hands or thoughts we raise in anger against others? What about the sinfulness we just can't stop committing? What about that voice of conscience, spurred on by the accusing voice of the devil himself, telling us that God can't be for us any longer, not with what we've done?

**Romans 8:31-34** <sup>31</sup> 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 gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> 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.

Paul clearly says "God is for you." And if He is for you then who can raise a hand in opposition against you? What of your continued sin and hands raised against others? God the Father did not spare what was most precious to Him, but instead His hand reached out to give you His gift of His own Son as your sacrifice for sin. The very one who will raise His hand in judgment against all unbelievers on the Last Day is the one who became human like you, in order die in your place for your continued sinning. And then rise again so that you might know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Father holds nothing against you. His resurrection testifies that you are no longer condemned. The very hand that would condemn you holds the nail marks in them that are proof you are no longer condemned. And that Savior has ascended to the place of rule over all things where He intercedes for you. Even as you continue to raise hands in anger and in sin your Savior testifies that each and every one of them is forgiven through your faith in Him. As much as your own sinful conscience and guilt lead you to believe otherwise, as much as Satan might like you to believe otherwise, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who is your Savior trumps all who would raise a hand against you by the work of His powerful nail scarred hands for you.

But what about all the evil that is in the world? What about the forces of nature that oppose us, the evil world leaders that threaten us, the hands of violence that threaten us, and the hands of hate and discord that politics raises against us? What if God should just get tired of it all and let go?

**Romans 8:26-27** <sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Our God stretched out His hand of love and support through the gift of the Holy Spirit. God knows all the things this world that make us groan. Paul calls the natural disasters that we see, including all the ways Creation no longer works for us but against us as Creation itself groaning. When mankind fell, God put a curse on Creation so that we would not fall in love with this fallen world, but instead turn in faith toward Him. And He sent His Spirit not to just reach out His hand to help us in times of need and withdraw it. His Spirit is the hand of intercession 24-7. The Spirit knows the troubled groanings of our heart. He knows the fears and doubts. He lifts prayers of intercessions to the Father that are too deep for words. And He responds back to us according to the mind and will of the Father which is the same as the Spirit. The Spirit helps us to conform our prayers and desires to the will of the Father who always knows what is best for us.

**Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**

Here the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul gives us a wonderful promise of just how much God is for us, how His hand is always reaching out to for the good of those He has called to faith. All things, the blessings of faith and fellowship we have here in this place are Him working for our good. But even those ways in which Creation is groaning, even the evil hands of violence and discord are His hand at work for the good of those who love God. And who are those who love God? Those who are called to faith. No one can truly love God or anyone else unless they have first received His love by faith into their hearts. God is so powerful and so omniscient that even the worst things the hands of the devil use to attack us with will in the end work out for our eternal good, turning us away from ourselves and back to faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Even those things that are clearly not for your good now, like sickness, cancer, and COVID, even in these things the hand of God is at work in you and through you. The suffering you may endure in faith can be the witness someone else needs to see and hear to turn them to faith in Christ or keep them in faith.

**Romans 8:38-39 <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> 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.**

These things that we must endure, the hands of evil and trouble and persecution that the world and the devil raise against us, can any of these pull the hand of God away from holding fast to us? The clear answer here is **NO!** Nothing of this world, no angel or demon, no groaning of Creation or of your own body can separate you from the iron clad hold God's hand has around you. Absolutely nothing can separate you from Jesus and His love for you.

## **How We Can Be Hands Reaching Out For Others**

As those called into faith, called into His Church, our Lord and Savior wants to use us to be His hand reaching out in love toward others. (*Video of Little League batter hugging pitcher who hit him*) That young man certainly could have responded like one of the Major League players with hands of anger and retribution. But instead, he used his hands and voice to express care and love for a player on the opposite team. And did you notice what kind of reaction that received in the crowd? How about the reaction in your own heart? When we use our hands to share the love of Christ it makes a difference in the world around us.

The Lutheran Women's Missionary League is an official auxiliary group of the LCMS dedicated to being hands and hearts showing God's love to others inside and outside the Church. Lamb of God's LWML has sponsored Seminary Students, sponsored and given of their time and talents for fellowship events and funeral dinners, given money to help those in need. They do this through the giving of their time and talents, and through the contributions of mites: pocket change and offerings given in support of the work of God's hands here and around the world. Truly they are God's hands of encouragement and love for all of us here at Lamb of God.

## **Conclusion**

There is nothing like seeing a loving hand reaching out to someone in need; to a small child walking with their parent, to a young boy scout frozen with fear and embarrassment, even young man sharing love and support to someone who hurt him. These acts of love can make a difference in this world. And they are examples of the hand of God who is for us in a way that no one else is. He gave His only Son whose hand provides forgiveness of sin now and eternal life to come. The work of His hand in our hearts and minds through His Spirit by faith gives us assurance that no matter what happens in our lives, God is always for us. God is always there for you. He is more than in your corner as you live out your life in this fallen world. He is actively fighting for you. His Son already won the victory, and gives that to you by faith through His resurrection. And on the Last Day His hand will clothe you in that glorious victory for eternity to come. Amen