

Who Dat? Romans 8:31-39

I'm not sure who first popularized the expression, but the sports cheer "Who dat?" is used by several teams, like the New Orleans Saints. "Who dat? Who dat? Who dat say gonna beat dem saints? Who dat?" They are the "Who dat nation."

Though Paul had never heard of it, it would be an apt cheer for "the saints" in Rom 8.

- Paul asks four "who questions" in verse 31-39, as he proclaims the believers eternal security in Christ Jesus.
- Weaving together many important previous gospel themes, Paul exults in the work of God for us in Christ, and the love of God for us in Christ.
 - **See Verses 31, 33, 34, 35**

In each case, the answer is "Nobody!"

- "Who dat ... say gonna beat dem saints?" Nobody because God is for us!
- We are more than conquerors through Christ who loved them.
- It's not because of how awesome the saints are, but because of our awesome our great Sovereign Savior is.

This triumphant passage is important for a number of reasons:

1. It highlights many truths taught previously in Romans. .

- 1-3, our need for a Savior.
- 3:21 God's provision for us in Christ.
- "Almost every religion talks about a savior coming. When you look in the mirror in the morning, when you're putting on your lipstick or shaving, you're looking at the savior. Nobody else is going to save you but yourself." (T Turner)
- Do you agree?
- Romans 8 reminds us of the Savior we need, and the Savior we have!

2. It completes the majestic chapter of Romans 8 in fitting fashion (No condemnation [8:1)/ No Separation [8:39])

- Like the rest of the chapter, it moves us to **worship**.

3. Practically, it's a wonderful text to mediate on when you find yourself in discouragement and despair.

What can make a Christian despair? Verses 8:31-39 show us three big causes:

- A. **Sin** (33-34)– stumble/fall. Rejoice! God's verdict has already been pronounced over us!
- B. **Suffering** (35)– finances, health, opposition, criticism? We are still in the grip of grace!
- C. **Death** (38)– How do we know death won't separate us from God?

This text tells us. God is for us, and Christ has saved us! And Jesus doesn't lie!

Fight despair with the assurance of God's love for you!

Despair can get enter the heart of the most godly of saints...

Martin Luther... Sometimes would go for weeks in the **blackest depression**. On one occasion, Luther was deeply discouraged. The church **authorities** were after him; he was under much **pressure** as a leader/teacher; he was **tired**; he was in **pain** from kidney stones. His wife Katie decided **to drape black cloth over the door (a cultural sign that someone had died)**. She also put on a **black dress** like going to a funeral. Luther was like, **“Oh dear. What further bad news do you have to add to my already-too-many burdens? Who died?”** Katie replied, **“God has died!”** **“What! Don’t blaspheme”** he exclaimed. She said, **“The way you're living, you act like He did.”** Her sarcastic rebuke got Luther’s attention. He went to his desk and etched the Latin word **“vivit”** on the desk. **“He lives.”**

If you find yourself in despair, Romans 8:31-39 is a wonderful text to remind us of our Living Savior, who has died, rose, and intercedes for his saints.

Questions/Answers on God’s Love and Our Security in Christ

Who can be against us? (31-32)	Nobody! God, having not spared his own Son, will give us all things.
Who shall bring a charge against us? (33)	Nobody! God has justified us!
Who will condemn us? (34)	Nobody! Christ Jesus died, rose, and intercedes for us!
Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (35-39)	Nobody! God’s love in Christ has made us super-conquerors.

Question #1: Who can be against us? (31-32)

V. 31 “these things”

- This refers to the whole of Romans (Schreiner) **What do we say about Romans 1-8?**

“God for us”

- If you were asked to summarize Romans, here is a great summary! **God is for us!**
- **Many will oppose us, but ultimately – God is for us.**
- **There’s pain and hardship, but don’t let that deceive you – God is for you!**
- **May God grant you faith to believe this!**

This is a somewhat **dangerous statement**: **Religious fanatics** claim **God is for them**.

- **Islamic extremist could say this.** And they are completely wrong.
- **But despite the abuse, we don’t want to deny it** – this is the good news of Romans – **God who calls, justifies, glorifies sinners – is for us!**
- **All the powers of hell may set themselves together against us. But they can never prevail, since God is on our side.**

- For years I have been speaking at youth camps (I'm in the middle of three consecutive weeks) ... at the end of the week... take pictures (Daughtry); sign my shirt/booklet, sometimes Bible; Romans 8:31 has been *my go-to verse* (when not feeling rascally).
- **It's hard to imagine anything greater than this truth.**
- In many ways the rest of the verses (32-39) illustrate how we know God is for us!

V. 32: This verse reinforces the point.

It could be an additional question. But I think it connects to the previous question.

- **How do we know God is for us?**
- It's not an airy-fairy kind of promise – It's not a fantasy that we've made up to make us feel better, like Peter Pan, "I believe in Fairies, I believe in Fairies."
- It's **rooted in space/time/history**. Something has happened to demonstrate it!
- Christian, you want to know that God is for you! – **Look to the cross!**
- The cross of Christ is the basis for **our ongoing hope!**
- Christ work for us ensures us of God's continued grace toward us.

He **"did not spare his own Son"** any expense.

- Language of **Gen 22:16 – Abraham/Isaac**.
- His "own son" speaks of a **special relationship**.
- **"But gave Him up for us all"** - Supreme act of love – *for us*

"give us all things"

- It's an argument from the greater to the lesser.
- **Illustration: Event, plane tickets, but not paying for parking...**
- "All things" is tied to Romans 8:28.
- "All things" involves **everything we need to get us to our destination: glory**.
- It includes **"all the things" that God provides to bring us there.**
- And probably a look to the future, where all things will be ours in Christ.
- The cross assures us of the ongoing, unfailing, generosity of God.

Question #2: Who shall bring a charge against us? (8:33)

"Bring a charge" -- This is another judicial expression. Answer: **"Nobody!"**

- **No prosecution can succeed because God has justified us.**
- **When the Omnipotent, Righteous, Judge of all the Earth says, "not guilty," then you are not guilty!**
- **The gavel has come down. Case closed. You are justified.**
- The **accuser** will certainly try to accuse you, bringing up our sins.
- Go **back to the gospel** and realize that the verdict has already been pronounced!

Paul is echoing Isaiah 50:8-9a here.

He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary?

Let him come near to me.

⁹ *Behold, the Lord GOD helps me;
who will declare me guilty?*

No one. How do we know God is for us? God has chosen us. God has justified us.

Question #3: Who will condemn us? (8:34)

“Who is to condemn?” -- Same issue with a Christ-centered answer this time.

- Sometimes our **own hearts** condemns us. (1 Jn 3:20)
- **Satan** will try to **accuse** will do this as well (Rev. 12).
- Our **Critics, enemies, and the dark forces of evil** may try to condemn us, but again, **they will not prevail.**
- Not only has **God chosen us, and justified us** – but the Savior **has died for us, been raised,** and ... **is interceding for us!**
- “With such a defense attorney, it is no wonder the prosecution loses its case!” (Moo).
- **The only person who could actually condemn us, has actually been condemned in place of us! He** has rescued us from condemnation (8:1).

Christ Jesus ... died

- He died for the very sins that would have condemned us.

Christ Jesus ... was raised

- The crowd declared him guilty! But God raised him and vindicated Son! The resurrection said, “They are wrong! He is the Messiah!”
- We are in Christ, and his victory and vindication is ours.
- His resurrection **demonstrating the Father’s acceptance of the Son’s sacrifice as sufficient.**
- Romans 4:25, “raised for our justification”

Christ Jesus ... is at the right hand of the Father

- **He occupies the seat of highest authority and honor** –
- **Having made perfect atonement, he sat down at the Father’s right hand** (Heb 1:3).
- He is **“interceding for us”**
- **He is our heavenly advocate and high priest. He continues to secure the benefits of salvation for us.**
- He’s not condemning us; He’s interceding for us!

Already, we’ve learned the Holy Spirit is interceding for us, and now the Savior!

Louis Berkhof: It is a consoling thought that Christ is praying for us, even when we are negligent in our prayer life; that He is presenting to the Father those spiritual needs which were not present to our minds and which we often neglect to include in our prayers; and that He prays for our protection against the dangers of which we are not even conscious, and against the enemies which threaten us, though we do not notice it. He is praying that our faith may not cease [cf., Lk 22:31], and that we may come out victoriously in the end.

Robert Murray M’Cheyne:

“If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me.”

Jesus is more committed to us, than we are to Him.

When we stumble and fumble, He is praying – unceasingly, fervently, and successfully.

He will hold us fast!

Question #4: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (35-39)

Because God is for us, we shall never be separated from God's love.

The **answer is twice as long as the others.**

Paul moves from “doctrinal truths” to the love of God – **he addresses our hearts.**

It is quite possible to know the Bible, but **be a very cold individual.**

- That doesn't have to be the case.
- These truths should warm our hearts.
- But Paul knows that Christians can sometimes question the love of God, and so **he puts the rhetorical peddle to the homiletical meddle** to convince Christians of the love of Christ for them.
- Jesus not only defends us; he also loves us.
- Jesus enters a relationship with us, and nothing can separate us from Him.

The Question (35a)

Possible candidates (35b):

- **Tribulation**: a word for strong pressure or trouble.
- **Distress** (“hardship”): **Perhaps** outward affliction or inward distress? Will that separate us? You may not feel particularly loved in distress, but Paul is reassuring you!
- **Persecution**
 - This was a real possibility for the early church, and a possibility for many Christians around the world.
 - If you were really about to face persecution, what text would you meditate on before hand? This would be a great option!
 - We should memorize Romans 8.
 - Thomas Kidd's biography of George Whitefield speaks of the success and trials he faced: **“In the spring of 1742 Soon a hail of “stones, dirt, rotten eggs, and pieces of dead cats” pelted the preacher. A clown climbed upon a man's shoulders and tried to slash Whitefield with a whip.** Every time he swung at Whitefield, however, the clown tumbled down instead of hitting his target. Another clown climbed a tree close to Whitefield's pulpit and “shamefully exposed his nakedness before all the people,” eliciting a chorus of hoots and laughter. Every attempt to silence Whitefield failed, and he went on preaching, praying, and singing for three hours.” – (Thomas Kidd, *George Whitefield: America's Spiritual Founding Father*, 148)
 - **Rotten eggs! Dead Cats! Clowns! What a combination!**
- **Famine**
 - The basic necessities of life.
- **Nakedness**

- Destitution – poverty.
- **Danger**
 - This reminds us of the reality of living out our faith in certain contexts.
 - Look at **2 Cor 11:23-28**
 - Paul wasn't a cold, analytical philosopher; he wasn't an armchair theologian. He had endures the very things he is talking about.
- **Sword**
 - This means execution.
 - This is the only one on the list that Paul himself had not already endured!

A Scriptural Reflection (36)

- This is from Psalm **44:22**.
- It's a Psalm about the suffering of the people of God.
- The point is this: suffering is a natural part of the Christian life. It's par for the course. Don't be surprised by it.

A Triumphant Exclamation (37)

- This is the main line of thought in this passage – **in all the pain, difficulties, challenges of life** – we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
- **“More than conquerors”** – a super conqueror.
 - **“To be more than a conqueror over affliction, distress, persecution, and so on indicates that the same enemies are actually turned to the good of believers through the power of God.”** (Schreiner)
 - There is a connection with verse 28 & 37 (Osten-Sacken)
- We don't grimly muddle our way through this Christian experience!
- We are victors that have found the every present love of God supporting us, working for our God, and empowering us in affliction!

“through Him”

- This is not baseless triumphalism
- The kind of thing you here in pop music **“All I do is win, win, win...”**
- It is **“through Him.”** He is the champion! Apart from him, we are not conquerors.
- Apart from Christ, you will be conquered by sin and death.
- But in Him, we are not destroyed. We are victorious.

“who loved us” – past tense. The cross.

“in all these things”

- Notice, he doesn't remove all these things!
- You may actually go through persecution.
- You may go hungry.
- But that doesn't mean God doesn't love you and isn't for you!
- Nothing can separate you!

Application:

- It is the love of Christ that **enables us to endure adversity with hope**. He who began a good work in us, will bring it to completion.
- It is his love that we must revel in to fight **discontentment**.
 - In Christ, we have what our hearts have always longed for!
 - This world is filled with discontentment – **they want more stuff** –
 - **“I wish I was a little bit taller....”**
 - Paul shows us you can’t take everything away, and still find deep satisfaction and peace and joy in the love of Christ.

Example: John Chrysostom (a.d. 347?–407), earned the nickname “golden-mouth” because of his eloquent sermons. But he was not loved by Roman authorities. In fact, the emperor threatened to banishment him if he remained a Christian. Chrysostom’s reply to the emperor reflects the heart of one with a Romans 8 kind of faith:

“You can’t banish me for this world is my father’s house.”

“But I will slay you,” said the emperor.

“No you can’t, for my life is hid with Christ in God.”

Emporer: “I will take away thy treasures.”

“No you can’t, for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there.”

“But I will drive you away from man and you shall have no friend left.”

“No you can’t, for I have a friend in heaven from whom you can’t not separate me. I defy you; for there is nothing you can do to hurt me.” (cited by Hughes, p. 171)

That’s a man living in Romans 8!

Once we are liberated from condemnation; once we are assured of the love of God in Christ; once we are grasp that God is for us; that the Spirit of God is indwelling us; and God is using suffering to make us like Jesus; once we know that the Spirit and the Son are praying for us; then we are liberated from an endless craving for things of this world.

A Celebration of God’s Love (38-39)

“I am sure” (“persuaded” “convinced”)

- Are you persuaded?
- This is the job of **preaching** – not just to inform the mind, **but impress the truth on the heart so that you are persuaded of the love of God in Christ Jesus.**
- This is the job of **counseling... of community... to “convince” one another afresh...**

Four pairs of threats (more potential separators) with “powers” thrown in between the third and fourth pair:

1. **“Death and life”** – the realm of human existence. Can this separate us?
2. **“Angels and demons”** – “spiritual realm” (Eph 6:12, Col 2:15). Can they separate us?
3. **“Things present or things to come”** – can the events of history separate us?
 - **“powers”** (the spiritual realm, 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21)– it’s unclear why Paul that included that here – but regardless, can dark powers do it?
 - **“No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand”**

4. **“Height nor depth”** – this is probably an all-encompassing summation of everything. Nothing in heaven, hell, or “in all the creation” can separate us!

Nothing in life or death – now or in the future; nothing in the spiritual realm can separate us from the **“love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!”**

Notice that – we are doubly secure!

- The love of God in Christ Jesus.
- We are so secure because we are in Christ.
- **And God will not let go of His Son.**
- We're united to Christ, & because of that no one can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:31 is true. God is for us. Verses 32-39 assure us. Let it saturate your heart.

Philipp Melanchthon loved Romans 8:31.

He served with Martin Luther during the Reformation.

- He was a true scholar, gifted preacher, with a gentler disposition than Luther.
 - He and Luther made a great pair!
 - They stood together until the end.
 - Melanchthon gave the sermon over the grave at Luther's funeral (1546).
 - When Mel. died (1560), his body was lowered next to Luther's.
 - One can visit the grave at the Castle Church of Wittenberg.
 - What made this man strong enough to endure the adversity of the Reformation?
 - What made him bold and gentle?
 - **Romans 8:31 is quoted more than any other Scripture in his lectures and correspondences. It hangs over the study wall in Wittenberg.**
 - **As Melanchthon sensed he was dying, he asked to be placed on a bed in his study.**
 - **His pastor was reading the Scriptures to him, and when he read Romans 8:31, Melanchthon exclaimed, “Read those words again!”**
 - The pastor read, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”
 - Melanchthon declared, **“That's it! That's it! That's it!”**
 - This text had always been the greatest comfort to him.
 - In the darkest hours, he comforted himself again by reciting, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”
- He died with this text on his lips! All who are in Christ can do the same.
 - It is indeed a great verse to live on and die on –
 - God is for us, and nothing can separate us from His love in Christ Jesus, Our Lord.
 - Jesus Christ is seated at the Father's right hand – a constant reminder that there is no condemnation against us, and no greater love for us.
 - These truths should cause us to sing!
 - These truths give us confidence in life and death.
 - These truths should make us bold. “The felt love of God makes heroic Christians” (Ortlund).
 - I pray that you know this love, and that you are thoroughly convinced of it.