

## ***THE WORD FOR TODAY***

### **ROMANS 8, 31-35,37-39**

## **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”**

The Christians in Rome were used to people and circumstances being against them. With their new ideas and their different lifestyle they challenged the pagan society all around them and persecution was never far away. It was a large Christian community, and Paul wanted to encourage them with a strong statement of the main points of the Christian faith.

We all need encouragement, particularly when our normal lives are shattered by pandemics, and now threats to our peaceful existence and the horrors of war not that far away. This passage is a wonderful reminder of the love of God which surrounds every one of us in all circumstances.



Follow the words of this passage from Paul's Letter to the Romans round the central display stand, the first panel being below this one and then move round to the right. The translation of the Bible used is the New International Version, and you can look it up on the internet under Bible Gateway. If you have a Bible at home you can find Romans in the last part of the New Testament.



***“If God is for us,  
who can be against us?”***

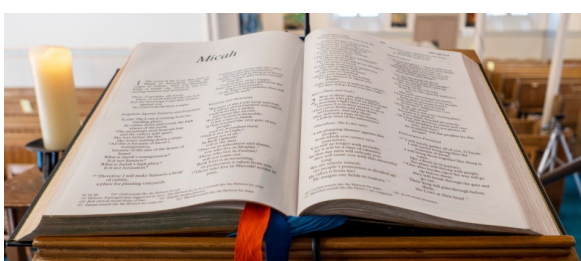
**1**



Do you sometimes feel that the odds are stacked against you? That you long to know that somebody, somewhere, is on your side? Is God not noticing that you are under pressure? Has he other more important things to worry about? Is he really there?

Paul is about to reassure all of us that God is indeed there, the most constant loving support we could ever imagine. This is God Almighty, maker of the universe, and if he is on our side then that will surely outweigh any troubles which are crowding in about us.

***Lord, help me to know your presence with me—  
hold me close when times are hard.  
Help me to trust that you always want the best for me.***



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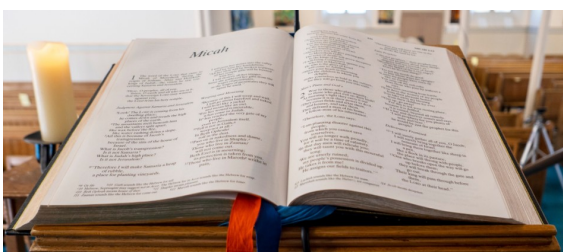
***“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”***

**2**

The loss of a child must be devastating—the loss of an only child even more so. Yet God sacrificed his only son on the cross—he gave his only child—for us, that we could be forgiven and could have a future to look forward to. That’s how much God loves us. If he was willing to do that for us, why should we have any doubt at all that he is also willing to give us everything we need? But we do doubt. We forget what he has done or gloss over the enormity of it, and therefore spend a lot of time worrying. Stop for a moment and remember the extent of God’s sacrifice for us.



***Lord, we thank you for the gift of your son  
to bring us the hope of forgiveness and life everlasting.  
Help us not to doubt that you will provide for our needs,  
but to rely on you every day.***



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***“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?***

**3**

***It is God who justifies.***

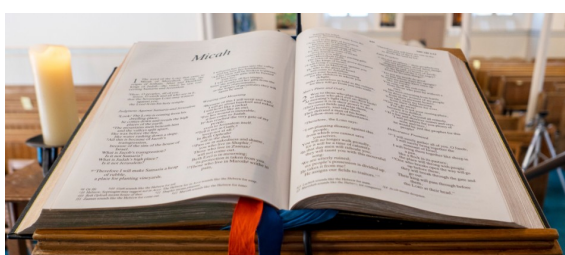
***Who then is the one who condemns?***

***No-one.”***

We believe that God sacrificed Jesus so that our sins could be forgiven and the burden of guilt lifted from us. Whatever we've done we can take it to God and humbly ask to be forgiven. It's amazing—it gives us such peace, and safeguards us against any charges from others. These days people's mental health is increasingly affected by abuse of all kinds, but particularly by the impact of social media abuse. This should not be happening—God made us and loves us; offers us a new start, a clean slate; nothing anybody can say can change that. These people are not the ultimate judge—God is. Something we should all remember and hold on to.



***Lord, thank you for lifting our guilt and shame from us.  
Help us to hold firm to our trust in you when others attack.  
And teach us in our own lives not to be judgemental towards others.***

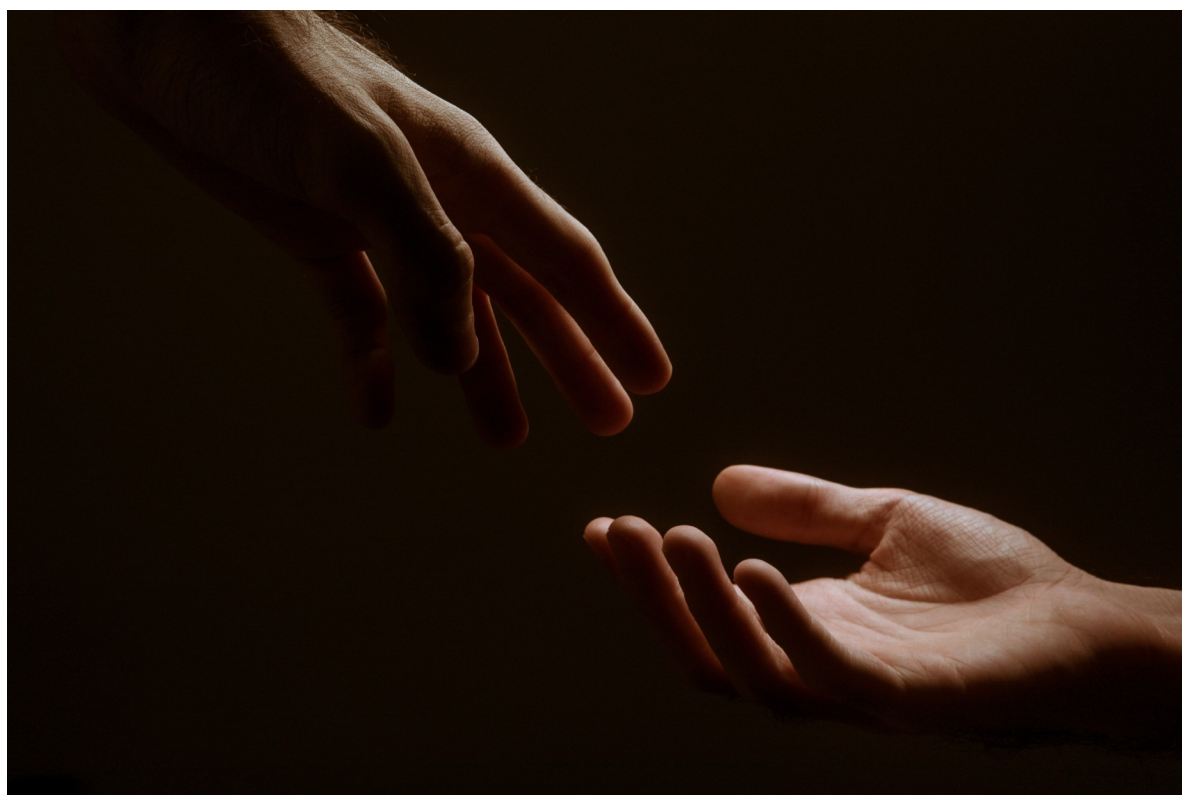


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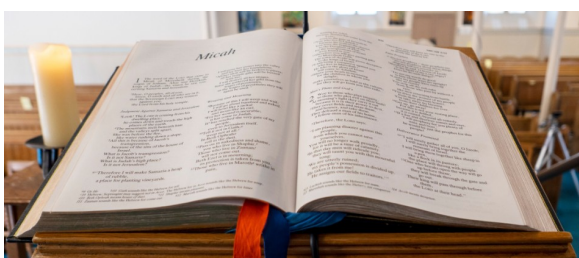
***“Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”***

**4**

We have friends in high places. Jesus died on the cross, rose again to life three days later, and then ascended into heaven, to be with God in glory. That doesn't mean that he forgot us—far from it. He promised us he would always be with us: we know his presence through the Holy Spirit as a constant friend. He promised us he would prepare a place for us: we have a future life to look forward to. In the meantime he prays for us and with us and that is such a comforting thought. If you don't know the peace and joy of Jesus in your life, pray that you will find the faith to invite him in.



***Lord Jesus, we praise you, risen, ascended, glorified.  
Thank you for your continuing care for us.  
Thank you for praying with and for us to our heavenly father.  
Be always in my life, I pray.***



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***“Who shall separate us from  
the love of Christ?  
Shall trouble or hardship or  
persecution or famine or nakedness  
or danger or sword?”***

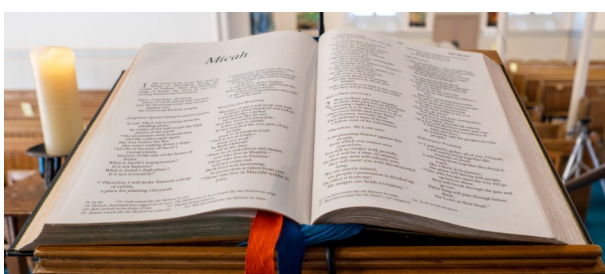
**5**

Jesus told a story once to illustrate what his love for us was like. A shepherd had a hundred sheep in his flock, but one had gone astray. He left his other sheep safely gathered in and went off to find the missing one. He did not give up until he found it and was able to bring it home again. We don't know whether it had slipped down a ravine or got stuck in a thorn bush or been chased by wild animals, or what had happened, but we know that the shepherd didn't give up on that sheep until he was safe again.

The disasters of this world, even the current disaster of the attack on Ukraine, can't separate us from the love of Jesus. He knows the cruelty of this world—he has experienced it. He will never let us go but will hold us close in this life and the next. We might be the ones who separate ourselves from Jesus by forgetting him or by doing things which shame us, but he will not give up on us—ever!



***Lord, thank you for knowing what we are going through.  
Help us to draw closer to you day by day  
and to know your love surrounding us.***



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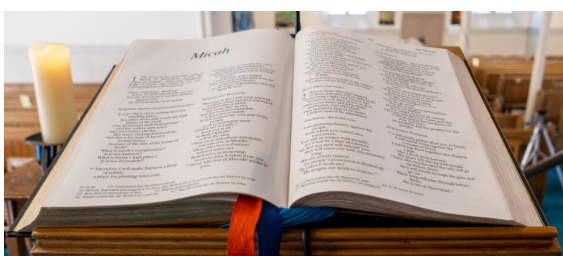
***“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”***

**6**



**“More than conquerors” sounds as if we can get through all sorts of disasters as some sort of superhero. To me, however, it means that we can get through really bad situations and find peace. Peace which comes from knowing that we will never be asked to face anything we can’t cope with. Jesus will always be there to help us through.**

***Lord, thank you for always being with us.  
Thank you for the strength and endurance we draw from you.  
Thank you for the peace you give us whatever is happening all around.***



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***“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 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.”***

**7**

What things terrify you? Things you have encountered and things you have seen or heard about in the media—perhaps some of the harrowing pictures from Ukraine. List them all in your mind. Not one can separate you from the love of God in Jesus. Not one.

The words above are a sentence to be stored in our minds and remembered always, but particularly when we are fearful or lonely. A powerful reminder of God's love.



***Lord, thank you for Paul's wonderful words.  
Reassure me when I doubt your love.  
Help me too to be able to say "I am convinced . . ."***



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