

A Word from Pastor Chuck

CALVARY CHAPEL DISTINCTIVES



SIX VITAL QUESTIONS OF LIFE—PART 1

“What shall we then say to these things?” Romans 8:31a

My Christian life was entirely revolutionized through understanding Romans 8:31–39 in which the apostle Paul asks and answers six vital questions. Contemplating Paul’s questions produced a 180-degree turnaround in my relationship with God, almost like a second conversion. In this column, we will look at the first question shown in verse 31.

The first of Paul’s six questions is, “What shall we then say to these things?” Perhaps “these things” refers to what Paul has just said in verses 26 through 28—that God has given us His Spirit to help us in our weakness, so that all things are working together for good for us who love God and are “called according to His purpose.” Paul then says that God foreknew us and predestined that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. He called us, justified us, and glorified us. Considering all God has done for me, what can I say to these things? God’s love and grace toward me is far beyond anything that I could deserve or merit. Realizing this, I can only praise Him because words are inadequate. The vocabulary of man is insufficient to express the wonder of the grace of God.

When I first clearly understood Romans 8, it transformed my relationship with God radically. I no longer relate to Him based on my goodness—which is variable at best—but based on His goodness, which is constant. These six questions asked by Paul have brought me into a new dimension of faith and trust in God.

He wants me to live victoriously and has provided all that is necessary for a life of victory. God is not against me.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31b

For a long time, I had the misconception that God, in a way, was against me. I grew up under positive reinforcement: When a child does something good, you reward him; when he behaves badly, you withhold reward. I carried that concept over into spiritual things. I assumed God rewarded me when I was good and especially faithful in my devotional life, but that He would withhold those rewards if I had erred. I sought His blessings predicated upon my faithfulness and goodness. Yet, knowing that I often failed, I never expected God to bless me.

I thought God was waiting for me to make a mistake just so He could teach me a lesson. I believed God was responsible for every bad thing that happened to me—punishing me for some wrong. After all, I deserved it. I thought that I had to earn God’s approval—that somehow, I had to persuade God to love me. I thought God loved good boys and hated bad boys, and my rewards and punishments would result from my actions. I did not comprehend the extent of God’s love for me—that He loved me in spite of my faults. I had no understanding of grace.

Then I understood the first part of Paul’s question, “If God is for us”—God is for me! He is not against me. In Romans 8:26, God gives His Holy Spirit to help in my weaknesses. Verse 29 says that God has predestined that I should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. He wants me to live victoriously and has provided all that is necessary for a life of victory. God is not against me.

So if God is for you, who can be against you? Satan. He wants to rob you of God’s blessings. The enemy robbed me of those blessings for many years by pointing out my failures. He whispered, “How can you expect God to bless you when you’re not really all that you should be?” Satan wants to destroy you. He wants to lure you into self-destructive practices. If you look honestly at your life, you can recognize these strongholds that are destroying you. Satan will do anything to keep you from following God completely because he knows that God loves you and wants to bless you.

To receive God’s blessings, we must believe He wants to bless us. If I think He won’t bless me, then I don’t have the faith to be blessed. However, if I understand that God wants to lavish His love upon me, then I learn to trust Him to bless me—not because I am worthy or deserving. That’s what grace is all about—undeserved blessings.

Though Satan is against us, we must believe and trust in God’s Word: “Greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). We should never think of Satan as an opposite of God. Satan is a created being; God is the Creator. Satan’s powers are limited; God’s powers are unlimited. And thus, if God is for me, then Satan—though he may be against me—is nothing against God. ☞