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If God Be For Us

By the late: C. D. Cole

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

What wonderful condescension that God should be for a single member of the human race! What marvelous grace and mercy that the thrice Holy God should dedicate His power and wisdom to the welfare of unholy and vile creatures! Who can understand the love that passed by fallen angels and laid hold of the seed of Abraham! Who can fathom the depths of mercy that contrived the way to save rebellious man? He who can ponder these questions unmoved and without thanksgiving has a terribly shriveled soul.

That God is for men is not a mere dream of a religious optimist; it is not the imagination of a deranged mind; it is not the myth of bygone days. The statement that God is for men is a fact of Divine revelation. Do away with this revelation, and the hope of all men is eclipsed by the clouds of uncertainty and doubt.

The greatest question that can engage the mind of men is this: "Is God for me?" With this question settled, nothing else should occasion much worry. With this question settled, we should go on our way to heaven with great rejoicing. It is a characteristic of a fallen race to be concerned about trivial matters, such as eating and drinking, and to ignore the paramount question of the welfare of the soul. Many show more concern about where they are going to spend the next few years than where they are going to spend

the next million years after this brief earthly sojourn is over. The masses evidence more interest in what they are going to have for the next meal than they do in what their menu is going to be for eternity. How many there are who are more interested in what they wear on a single day than in what their dress will be throughout eternity. Most everybody tries to learn the language of this earth, but alas, how comparatively few are interested in the language of the heavenly Canaan. I know a man who once said he'd rather his children were in heaven learning the alphabet than in hell studying Greek. What evidences we have of moral and spiritual insanity and degeneracy in the things to which people give the preeminence in their thought and conduct.

Let me warn against presumption. God is not for everybody. Such a thought precludes the punishment of anybody, and lands us in the camp of universalism. God is against some people, and the direst woe and most indescribable doom is to be their portion forever. If God is for us, there is no danger ahead of us—no real danger—for "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). If God is for us, there will be internal evidences that He is acting on our behalf, and unless you have those evidences, you have no right to say that God is for you—it is nothing more than fatal presumption.

In the passage before us, salvation is revealed as a series of acts on the part of God, beginning

in His foreknowledge of us, and ending in His glorification of us. Salvation in its most comprehensive sense is a succession of steps taken by God in our behalf. Of course, there is a human side to salvation, but that is not what is before us in our text. We are now to be occupied with those steps God takes in the salvation of men. The work is begun in eternity past, and is consummated in eternity before us. And it is blessed to know that His purposes are not thwarted, nor His plans frustrated. The context tells of five things God does for us in the work of salvation. God is for us:

1. In foreknowledge. The first thing God did for us was to foreknow us. Much heresy has been built upon a perversion of the foreknowledge of God. We need to be warned against depending upon popular opinion, or human dictionaries for the meaning of Bible terms. Scriptural usage determines the meaning of Bible words. The word "foreknowledge" is never used in the Old Testament, but "know" occurs often. When applied to God, the word often means to regard with favor, denoting not a mere cognition, but an affection for the one in view. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). In the New Testament the word "know" is often used with the same meaning. "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23); "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14); "But if any man love God, the same is known of him" (I Cor. 8:3); "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19). These passages show us the distinction that must be made between knowing about persons and knowing persons. The word "foreknowledge" occurs about five times in the New Testament. It is never used to refer to events but to persons. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23); "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" (Rom. 8:29,30); "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life" (Rom. 11:2,3); "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,

through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (I Peter 1:2); "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Peter 1:20).

2. In predestination. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:5). To predestinate is to determine from the start what shall be the outcome. When God foreknew His people, that is when He set His love and choice upon them, He purposed that they should ultimately become like His only begotten Son. This is the reason given why all things work together for good to them that love God.

3. In calling. This is the first internal operation of grace in the soul. It is the beginning of a Christian experience. It is the beginning of the good work in us. It is that which produces repentance and faith in us. It is that which Peter exhorts us to make sure of.

4. In justification. Justification is God's judicial declaration that there is nothing against. It is a declaration of righteousness on the ground of the finished work of Christ. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

5. In glorification. This is the last step in our deliverance from sin. It is the blessed goal to which we look with sighs and hopes. It will be the end of all conflict and struggle with indwelling sin. It will be the end of all pain and sorrow and death. Tears will be wiped away and never again will they flow from burning eyes upon our scalded cheeks. It will be the end of all disappointment and discouragement. There will be no more strife and envy and hate where the redeemed are. Love will flow in a steady stream from heart to heart. We will be ushered into God's presence, never more to roam. From this time on, we will be like Christ, but He is to have the pre-eminence, for He is to be the firstborn among many brethren.

We would now turn our message into practical account by asking, with Paul, "What shall we then say to these things?" What kind of a feeling do these truths excite in your breasts? Do you love or hate these doctrines? Do you highly value them or do you despise them? Your heart's attitude towards them is a good index to your spiritual condition. To the saved and spiritual, these doctrines will excite:

1. Humility. As we follow the footprints of His acts from foreknowledge to glorification, and ask the reason for such benevolence, our hearts will humbly confess that it was not for anything good within us by nature.

2. Gratitude. As we follow the footprints of His love and behold the wondrous workings of

His grace, the stream of gratitude, so prone to go dry, swells and irrigates the land of man-soul. (Spurgeon).

3. Security. These truths give a sense of security to God's people which supports them under a sense of their own weakness. If there were nothing to guarantee our perseverance except our own resolutions, we might indeed despond; for how could we ever arrive at heaven's gate? But the passage before us shows that all things are secured by God, and that in His almighty hands are all the links of the chain that connects us with heaven. The truth is this: that although we have innumerable enemies, and are ourselves utter weakness, yet if God be for us, nothing can be so against us as finally to do us injury. Paul is not affirming that we have no enemies, but that if God be for us, He will take care of all our enemies, and that no weapon formed against us will prosper.



"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9).

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SUNDAY SCHOOL AND CHURCH

"Gather the people together, men, and women, and the children . . . that they may hear, and that they may learn." Deut. 31:12

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