

THE LEAP OF FAITH

Dr. Win Arn is a noted minister and author. A while back he was producing a film entitled *Circus*. During the filming, one of the members of the cast, a young man, pointed to the high trapeze and said, "Dr. Arn, why don't you try it?" The other performers heard the challenge and joined the growing chorus. "Try it! Try it!" Eyeing the large safety net under the paraphernalia, the brother cautiously replied, "Well, why not!" Very slowly he began to climb the small rope ladder. Twenty feet, thirty feet, forty feet, finally he crawled onto a minuscule platform which seemed miles above the assembled crowd. He looked down. The once-large safety net had shrunk to unbelievably small proportions. "Go ahead, you can do it!" the performers encouraged. Taking the trapeze bar in his perspiring hands and steadying his shaking knees, he prepared to jump. Across from his platform other members of the team were ready to throw over the empty trapeze. Fear gripped the preacher. His knees began to shake, his hands became sweaty, the place grew quiet. Suddenly...

Please turn with me now to Romans 8. This has long been one of my favorite passages of Scripture. It begins with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separation." In between, there is "no defeat." The chapter shows us that we need not fear the past, present, or future because we are safe, secure, and satisfied in the grace and the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Having said that, I want you to notice with me that verses 31-39 which pose four very powerful questions. The answers to these questions hold tremendous promise for the child of God. I want us to look at these questions this morning.

QUESTION 1 – ROMANS 8:31 -- "IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?"

These very same words were scribbled on the walls of the men's room at a Kansas truck stop. Some creative soul had scrawled beneath them: "The Highway Patrol!"

The overall message of the Bible can be summed up in many ways. However, I don't know of a better formula than the one Paul spells out for us here. In fact, if there's one message which reverberates through Scripture from start to finish, from Genesis to Revelation, it is this, GOD IS FOR US; GOD IS ON OUR SIDE!

In fact:

- **THE GOD THE FATHER** proved that He was for us when He sent Jesus His Son to die in our stead.
- **JESUS THE SON** proved that He was for us in that while we were yet sinners He gave Himself up for us on the cross.
- **THE HOLY SPIRIT** proved that He was for us by taking up residence within us, equipping us, and then making us His temple.

The stories of...

- Adam and Eve,
- Noah and the Great Flood,
- Sodom and Gomorrah,
- David and Bathsheba,
- the fall of Peter and Judas,
- Revelation and the end times...

All detail that God is fighting for us, not against us. At any point along the line He could have quit on us, thrown in the towel, and wiped every single human being from off of the face of the earth -- and with just cause! He is God. The choice was and is His. But He didn't. He doesn't.

I want you to now look at three powerful interwoven verses:

- Romans 5:8, **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**
- Romans 8:32 says, **“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?”**
- Genesis 22:12, **“You have not withheld your son, your only son, from me”**

This passage in Genesis speaks of Abraham being willing to offer Isaac as an offering to God. God concluded from that act that if Abraham would not withhold his own son, then he would not withhold anything from God. Isaac was the best gift the brother had.

In strikingly similar words Paul says that God too offered up His son for us in death. If He would do that for us, then He would certainly give us all good things, for logic itself would tell us that every other gift or sacrifice would truly pale in comparison.

Now listen to Romans 8:32 once again, **“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?”**

The following true story is taken from the May 1986 issue of *Guideposts* magazine. "I'm 16 years old, and ever since I was a young girl my parents told me that God is always watching over us. I believed this, but I couldn't really say that my experience had proven this to be so. Maybe it will when I get older, I thought. One winter night an unexpected sound woke our household at 3:00 am. My father dashed down the hall, sniffing the air. My sister and I scurried to our bedroom door. When Dad came back upstairs he said, "I don't understand it." He breathed a sigh of confusion, then returned to his room. I couldn't go back to sleep. I went to my parents' room and said to my father, who couldn't sleep either, "Are you sure? Did you check -- ?" "Yes, Tracy, I checked everything," said Dad. I started back to my room, but as I reached the door my mother suddenly cried out, "The coffee pot! I think I left the coffee pot on at church." Earlier that evening my mother had served coffee at a church gathering. Now, in an instant, Dad was gone. Mom and I waited at home. I could tell Mom was terribly afraid that she might have been guilty of burning down the church. Ten minutes later my father returned. He let out a relieved sigh and said, "Now I understand. The pot was on -- burned empty and beginning to smoke." And what, a half hour earlier, had waked us? The smoke alarm in our own -- smoke-free -- house.

Do you have an explanation for such things happening?

1. Coincidence?
2. Luck?
3. Or God?

I choose the third answer. I believe that He is far more involved in our affairs, in caring for us and protecting us than we can ever imagine. Only in Heaven will we fully come to understand the real extent of His care and His provision on our behalf.

Psalms 1:6 promises, **“For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”**

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, noted that if God cares for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field; surely He will care for you and me!

One rendering of Psalms 23:1 is: **“The Lord is my shepherd; that's all I need.”**

Jeremiah 29:11 confirms: **“For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’”**

Someone has observed, "If God is **AGAINST** us, it really does not make very much difference who is for us. And if God is **FOR** us, it does not make any difference who is against us." Amen.

QUESTION NUMBER 2 – ROMANS 8:33 -- “WHO WILL BRING ANY CHARGE AGAINST THOSE WHOM GOD HAS CHOSEN?”

Please allow me to share this passage again from another translation: **“Who shall bring an accusation against the chosen ones of God...?”** The verse raises certain questions:

- Who has the legal standing necessary to bring a charge against a saint of God?
- Who has jurisdiction?
- Who can indict or arraign before the Father one whom the Lord has purchased by His own death on the tree; one whom the Lord Jesus Christ has declared to be innocent?

WHAT ABOUT THE DEVIL? Yes, Satan points his bonny finger at the redeemed and shouts accusations. I brought this truth out two weeks ago when I preached on false guilt. I want to now point something out that I didn't mention in that message.

Zechariah 3:1-2 says, **“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you!’”** Here we see a righteous man – Joshua the high priest -- being accused by the devil before God.

Revelation 12:10 also notes: **“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.’”**

Question. What were the saints here in Revelation doing during the time the accusations were taking place? What was Joshua the high priest doing while Satan was leveling charges against him? We don't know. The Bible doesn't really say. Evidently though, the brothers didn't try to defend themselves. They seem to be quiet while the Lord takes up the battle in the heavenlies for them.

But pastor, what were the accusations?

1. The Bible doesn't say what they were.
2. They didn't matter.
3. God didn't dignify them by giving them place in the Word of God.

Rather than respond to the devil by saying, “You don't say”, He sent him away. Rather than rebuke the accused, He rebuked the accuser! Think about it! **OUR CASE, DEAR FRIENDS, RESTS IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD!**

WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ACCUSE US?

Some time back my wife and I were visiting some blessed saints of the Lord. The conversation was interesting; the company was most enjoyable. In the midst of this, a question was raised about a situation that touched the other family quite deeply. For a moment the room was silent and then the husband said, “I'm sorry; but if we can't say something good about someone, then we choose not to say anything at all.”

The truth of the matter is, the subject was dropped. He had the chance to cut somebody down. He could have presented his side of the issue. He could have made his case to the pastor; but he didn't.

Throughout the whole evening, the man and his wife followed through on this and never played the part of the accuser of the brethren.

I rarely preach on gossip. It has been several years since I have raised the issue in a sermon. I guess I am a pessimist in this area, but quite frankly, I don't think the problem is going to go away simply because I preach a sermon on it. People have been gossiping since Adam and Eve raised a little Cain. However, I will say this about gossip, since I am on the subject, I believe that the real sin with gossip is that of taking up allegiance with Satan as the accuser of the brethren. It is wrong for a saint to go against another saint whom the Lord is interceding for before the Father!

I want to repeat something that I shared in my marriage class. A number of years ago I was praying about a certain situation. It involved a saint who had committed an obvious sin. As I prayed about the person, I told the Lord about what the individual had done, about how wrong the person had been and of the trouble the brother had caused in the body of Christ. At that point the Lord rebuked me. He then let me know that He was well aware of that person's shortcomings and mine too. Instead of accusing the person before the Lord, I was supposed to be interceding on his behalf. I got the message. I do not -- we do not -- have the liberty to play the role of the **"Accuser of the brethren"** even in prayer.

Aren't we all guilty of what I call "selective indignation?" The degree to which we hate certain sins is directly related to whether or not that sin is in our life or in the life of someone else!

Hebrews 4:13 notes, **"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."** God the Father knows all about everything -- including who is and isn't guilty -- without our reminding Him.

God, again, knows the truth about you and me. He does not have to depend on some simple human being to update Him on what we are up to. He knows our ways, our thoughts, our affections, our failures, our sins, our hopes and our dreams. We are not going to tell the Lord anything about anyone that He hasn't known all along.

The Scripture is clear, we are to **"pray for those that despitefully use us."** We pray FOR -- not AGAINST! We are to **"bless and curse not."** We are to follow our Lord's blessed example.

WHAT ABOUT GOD?

Will He not accuse us? After all, again, He knows all that there is to know about us! Let's be honest. If anyone has reason to charge us with wrong, would it not be the Lord? And yet, the Father cannot/does not bring a charge against us either, for He is the very one who has acquitted us.

- For Him to accuse us then would mean that His blood was not sufficient.
- His salvation was a failure.
- We are still in our sins.

Yes, His Spirit notifies us when we do wrong. The Father can even discipline us as an earthly father corrects his child. However, the Lord does not "charge" us. The words "charge" or "accuse" as used here means: "to criminate, to call in question, to come forward as an accuser." Again, that is the role of the enemy of our souls, not the savior of our souls.

Romans 3:23-24 states, **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."** God is painfully aware of our failures and yet in the same breath in which He alludes to our sins. He declares us to be justified. That means that God "accounts us as righteous", that He sees us "just as if we had never sinned."

This is a true story. A young man and his father were deer hunting in the wilds of Oregon. It was early evening, and they were thinking about returning to camp when a noise exploded in the brush nearby. Before he even had a chance to lift his rifle, a small blur of brown and white came shooting up the road straight for the dad. It all happened so fast, the older man hardly had time to think. He looked down and there was a little brown cottontail -- utterly spent -- crowded up against his legs between his boots. The little thing was trembling all over, but it just sat there and didn't budge.

Now this was really strange. Wild rabbits are frightened of people. It is almost impossible to believe that one would come running right up to your feet and sit down, but that is exactly what happened here.

As the father was puzzling over this, another player entered the scene. Down the road -- maybe twenty yards away -- a weasel burst out of the brush. When it saw the man with the rifle -- and

its intended prey sitting at his feet -- the predator froze in its tracks, its mouth panting, its eyes glowing red.

It was then that the older man understood he had stepped into a little life-and-death drama in the middle of the forest. The cottontail, exhausted by the chase, was only moments from death. This tall strange man was its last hope of refuge. Forgetting its natural fear and caution, the little animal instinctively crowded up against him for protection from the sharp teeth of its relentless enemy.

The hunter did not disappoint his new found friend. He raised his powerful rifle and deliberately shot into the ground just underneath the weasel. The animal seemed to leap almost straight into the air a couple of feet and then rocketed back into the forest as fast as its legs could move.

For a while the little rabbit didn't stir. It just sat there, huddled at the man's feet in the gathering twilight while he spoke gently to it:

- "Where did it go, little one?"
- I don't think he'll be bothering you for a while.
- Looks like you're off the hook tonight."

Soon the rabbit hopped away from its protector into the forest.

1. Where, beloved, do you run in time of need?
2. Where do you hide when the accuser pursues you like a relentless weasel, seeking your destruction?
3. Where do you turn when your energy is spent... when weakness saps you and you feel you cannot run away any longer? You run to Jesus. You are safe in Him. The accuser can find no place there.

QUESTION NUMBER 3 – VERSE 34 -- “WHO IS HE THAT CONDEMNS?”

In verse 33 Paul asked in effect, “**Who is it that can press charges against me?**” Here he asks, “**Who would go to the witness stand against me?**”

One of the great stories in the Bible is the familiar account of the adulterous woman. John 8:1-11 tells of this woman who had been caught in the act. The law mandated that she be stoned to death. The religious leaders already had ammunition in hand when they brought her to Jesus.

They then inquired: “**What then do You say?**”

What's the verdict, Jesus?

What should we do?

Jesus, as you remember, then knelt down and starting writing something in the sand. What do you think He wrote? While I can't be sure, I do think I know.

1. Names of girlfriends,
2. Lies that had been told,
3. Items that had been stolen,
4. Laws that had been violated....

On and on He wrote listing one sin after another. Sins which these same religious leaders were guilty of committing themselves.

As He started to write He challenged, “**He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.**” As He stooped again to write -- more sins, very secret sins --they all, beginning with the oldest, walked away, leaving their rocks behind. John 8:10-11 declares (*New American Standard Version*), “**And straightening up, Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ And she said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more.’**” Jesus does not stand in the seat of condemnation. We should not sit there either!

Romans 8:1 promises: **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** Saints, we can rest on the truth of these verses! God is not about to condemn the very ones that He has forgiven!

When Paul asked, **“Who is he that condemns?”** he noted in the very same verse: **“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.”**

Let me set the stage for you here:

1. Our Father God sits as our Judge.
2. Our Savior and best Friend, Jesus, is our attorney, our intercessor and advocate. We do not have to represent ourselves. In prayer we present our case to Jesus, and He in turn, carries the case before the Father.
3. The Holy Spirit, then too, is inside of us praying to the Father that everything regarding us turn out to our good.

Wow! That sounds like a good deal to me; how about you? Let me take this one step farther, when the Judge looks at His Son, He sees **“a Lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing in the middle of the throne...”** according to Revelation 5:6. This seems to indicate that the scars of the cross are still visible. Thus, the evidence of His atoning work at Calvary is ever before the throne. Jesus therefore says, "Father, the charges have no basis; Mike's sins are under the blood. See the scars? I died for him. His sins are no more! He is mine and I am his. There will be no condemnation."

Do you remember Colossians 3:3? It says, **“For you have died and your life is Hidden with Christ in God.”**

And, again, Galatians 2:20, **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”**

1 Peter 2:9 then adds, **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”**

- We are God's chosen ones.
- We are God's royal ones.
- We are God's holy ones.
- We are God's select ones.

We are God's righteous ones!

Therefore:

“If God is for us, who is against us?”

“Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones?”

“Who is he that condemns?”

TAKING THE TRAPEZE BAR IN HIS PERSPIRING HANDS and steadying his shaking knees, Dr. Arn prepared to jump. Across from his platform a young trapeze artist was ready to send forth the empty trapeze. Mustering up all his courage, the preacher cried, "Go!" and off he went swinging out into space.

As a result of his successful effort, Dr. Arn noted, "Flying through the air, I made three important discoveries:

FIRST, you can't hold on to one bar while grasping for the other. You must let both hands go and leap!
SECOND, it's frightening and threatening to let go of your security.

THIRD, you don't have forever to make up your mind."

"Jump . . . go ahead . . . jump!" "On the third arc I did! Flying through the air, I reached out and grasped the bar with my fingertips, went swinging to the other side, and was pulled safely to the platform. Amid the applause and cheers of the people below, I had taken a leap of faith."

Jesus likewise asks each one of us to also take a leap of faith. We have to turn loose of self reliance and pride and grab hold of His righteousness.

He is our hope and salvation.

He alone can save us and keep us.

Have you taken the leap of faith?