

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

✦ **He gave His Son for us. (vv.31,32)**

✦ **He justifies us. (v.33)**

✦ **He prays for us. (v.34)**

In the Name of Christ Jesus our living Hope, dearly redeemed brothers and sisters:

Did you figure it out yet? Last week’s sermon ended: “Our hope in good times and bad is based on the most favorite passage of the Bible. But that’s next week.” That sermon included the second most favorite passage of the Bible. The Lord’s Apostle Paul has been building up to this for seven chapters. He pounded the fact that we all need justification from God because of our universal depravity in the human race. But Christ came as promised – died and was raised as promised. Now universal justification of the world is ready to be received by faith. And this has awesome results for everyone who simply believes what God says. Our whole life turns from darkness to light, from immorality to daily struggles living up to what we have already received from God. We want to be like Jesus. Even our frustrations are blessed with thankfulness as Paul cried out ending Romans 7: **“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!”** (7:24f)

Chapter 8 pulls us up and away from the battle to the glories of life in the Holy Spirit. **“We share in [Christ’s] sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”** (8:16f) Will it be worth it in the end? Heaven’s glory far outweighs earthly troubles. And we are not alone. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groans and sighs beyond words. (8:26f) In the Bible’s second most favorite passage, God promises: **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”** (Romans 8:28 NIV84) Paul is about to soar on the wings of the Spirit into God’s incomparable, insuperable, inseparable love for us. This solid truth rests on the most favorite passage.

✦ **He gave His Son for us. (vv.31,32)**

Can you hear it? **“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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 one thing we needed most was our heavenly Father’s most precious possession: His one and only Son. Why did God not spare His Son but handed Jesus over for punishment on the cross? We owed a debt we could not pay. Only Jesus had an innocent life to give in our place. So Jesus volunteered for this rescue mission, and God the Father let Him go. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** (John 3:16 NIV84) This most favorite passage of the Bible holds up everything else.

But God really isn’t done here. He wants to pile on the comfort so that we can see how truly loved each of us is from all eternity. Last week we heard this was not based on our feelings or our faith because God chose us before time began, before we were around to feel or believe anything.

To illustrate, I want to share a story from a China Partners devotion. But first, think how Elijah needed this in our First Lesson. The faithful prophet fled from wicked Queen Jezebel. The LORD sent fire from heaven and her god Baal could not. Elijah had Jezebel’s prophets slaughtered. Now she wanted him dead. Far south at Mount Horeb, where God gave Most the Ten Commandments, Elijah felt rock-shattering wind, earthquake, fire, but God was not in them. God came in the gentle whisper of His Word, as His love came softly in the birth of His Son Jesus. **He gave His Son for us. Who can be against us?**

### ✦ He justifies us. (v.33)

**“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.”** (Romans 8:33 NIV84) That’s why Paul is so distressed about his fellow Jews in today’s Second Lesson (Romans 9:1-5). They had so many advantages from being God’s people, yet refused God’s righteousness as a free gift. Satan accuses God’s people day and night. Our neighbor may see acting us unchristian and call us a hypocrite. God sees and hears every sin of thought, word and deed – not just daily, but hour after hour. If God kept a video of our life, who could watch? Guilt under God’s Law would destroy us all.

But don’t you see? **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”** Satan is condemned. All sinners are hypocrites. Whenever they criticize others, they condemn themselves. Only God’s opinion counts. God uses legal language here in the original Greek. His gavel struck the Judge’s bench when Christ died. He declared us, **“Not guilty!”** for Jesus sake. His verdict was broadcast on universal media when God raised Jesus back to life on Easter. **“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?”**

### ✦ He prays for us. (v.34)

And one more thing before that story of “The Eight-Cow Wife.” If you were listening a few weeks ago, wasn’t it awesome how the Holy Spirit prays for us with groans that words cannot express? But we have another Prayer Warrior because here it says, **“Who is he that condemns? 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.”** Our prayers are powerful not because of our feelings or our faith. Prayer power is hard wired to God’s promises. On top of that Paul shows our Prayer Warriors pleading our case for God 24/7. While you’re sleeping, they’re hard at work. Sleep softly. While you’re worrying, they’re asking the Father to help you. So stop worrying. While you’re celebrating, they give thanks as well. So rejoice! At God’s Right hand is His favorite Son, His one and only begotten Son. When He looks at you, He sees Jesus who covered you with His own righteousness. And all around the throne in that radiance of glory is the Holy Spirit hovering in constant prayer for you. Because of Jesus there is no condemnation. **He prays for us.**

### **“The Eight-Cow Wife”**

*Everyone knew Johnny Lingo as the sharpest trader in the Pacific. But they all laughed to hear his name. When one man told, “Go see Johnny Lingo,” his son nearly choked and almost rolled off the steps.*

*“What’s this?” I demanded. “Some kind of joke? Is Johnny Lingo the town idiot?”*

*“Not idiot,” my host said. “Five months ago, Johnny came to Kaniwata and found a wife. He paid her father eight cows!”*

*I knew enough island customs that two or three cows bought a fair wife, four or five a satisfactory one.*

*“Eight cows!” I said. “She must have been a beauty that takes your breath away.”*

*“That’s why they laugh,” he replied. “It would be kindness to call her plain. She was little and skinny with no endowments. She walked with her shoulders hunched and her head ducked, as if she was trying to hide behind herself. Her cheeks had no color, her eyes never opened beyond a slit and her hair was a tangled mop half over her face. She was scared of her own shadow, frightened by her own voice. She was afraid to laugh in public. She never romped with the girls, so how could she attract the boys?”*

*“But she attracted Johnny?”*

*“All the way to the council tent the cousins were urging Sam to try for at least one cow. They felt lucky to find such a good husband for Sarita. But Johnny came into the tent and went straight up to Sam Karoo and took his hand, ‘Father of Sarita, I offer eight cows for your daughter.’ And he delivered the cows. Then Johnny took Sarita on a honeymoon and home to Narabundi. We haven’t seen them since.”*

*The next day I visited Johnny and found him to be a slim, serious man. He welcomed me into his home with grace that made me feel like the owner. I was glad his own people respected him without mockery.*

For the study behind this sermon or for copies email [m.cordes@comast.net](mailto:m.cordes@comast.net) .  
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He asked, "They speak much of me on that island? What do they say?"

"That you are a sharp trader and the marriage settlement that you made for your wife was eight cows?"

His eyes lit up with pleasure. "Everyone in Kiniwata knows about the eight cows? And in Narabundi everyone knows too." His chest expanded with satisfaction. "Always and forever, when they speak of marriage settlements, it will be remembered that Johnny Lingo paid eight cows for Sarita."

I was disappointed. All this mystery was only vanity. Not enough for Johnny to be the smartest, strongest, quickest. He had to be famous for his buying a wife?

As we spoke a woman entered the adjoining room and placed a bowl of blossoms on the dining table. She stood still a moment to smile with sweet gravity at the young man beside me. Then she went swiftly out again. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. This girl had an ethereal loveliness. The dew-fresh flowers with which she'd pinned back her lustrous black hair accented the glow of her cheeks. The lift of her shoulders, the tilt of her chin, the sparkle of her eyes all spelled a pride to which no one could deny her the right. And as she turned to leave she moved with grace that made her look like a queen.

When she was out of sight I turned back to see Johnny Lingo looking at me with eyes full of pride.

"You admire her?"

"She's glorious. Who is she?" (I couldn't help thinking this servant made it difficult for his homely Sarita. Such a beautiful woman to tempt Mr. Lingo!) □

"She is my wife."

I stared at him blankly. (Was this polygamy? Eight cows for Sarita and her slave?)

"This is the only one – Sarita. Perhaps you wish to say she does not look the way they say in Kiniwata?"

"I heard she was homely. They make fun of you because you let yourself be cheated by Sam Karoo."

"You think he cheated me? You think eight cows were too many? She can see her father and her friends again. Do you think anyone will make fun of us then? Much has happened to change her since then."

"You mean she married you?"

"That, yes. But most of all, I mean the arrangements for the marriage."

"Arrangements?"

"Do you ever think," he asked reflectively, "what it does to a woman when she knows that the price her husband has paid is the lowest price for which she can be bought? And then later, when all the women talk, as women do, they boast of what their husbands paid for them. One says four cows, another maybe six. How does she feel – the woman who was sold for one or two? This could not happen to my Sarita."

"Then you paid that unprecedented number of cows just to make your wife happy?"

"Happy? I wanted Sarita to be happy, yes, but I wanted more than that. You say she's different from the way they remember her in Kiniwata. This is true. Many things can change a woman. Things inside and outside. But the thing that matters most is what she thinks about herself. In Kiniwata, Sarita believed she was worth nothing. Now she knows that she is worth more than any other woman on the islands."

"Then you wanted..."

"I wanted to marry Sarita. I loved her and no other woman."

"But – " I was close to understanding....

"But," he finished softly, "I wanted an eight-cow wife." <sup>1</sup>

And God the Father wanted the most beautiful bride for His Son. So He paid the ultimate price when Jesus shed His blood for us all. Knowing that He valued us so much, makes His holy bride, the Church, beam with beautiful brilliance and holy joy. All things are ours in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> By Patricia McGerr, □Adapted and edited from it's original appearance in Reader's Digest, February 1988, pp. 138-141.

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