



A Spiritual Encouragement Message August 1, 2020

If God Is For Us!

by Derrick Victor

What then shall we say to these things? 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 with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

**“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:31-39)

The apostle Paul wrote these words to the Roman church in the 1st Century. He wrote them to the church that rested in the epicenter of the dominant world power. A dominant world power which created the Via Appia (Appian Way). A large road infrastructure which allowed citizens of the known world to travel safely for commerce. A dominant world power which levied heavy taxes on its citizenry under the penalty of prison or death. A dominant world power which looked down on Christian in the first Century. In fact, many times Roman roadways were referred to as “the way”. When Christians emerged on the scene, their first official name was “the way” (**Acts 9:2**). The contrast must have been sure and true for the early Christians. One “way” led to flesh and a worldly kingdom which held power over the known world. The true “way” in Jesus Christ led to the spirit and to the heavenly kingdom of God.

Not only was the Roman government powerful, they were led by evil leaders in many circumstances. Prior to Paul's letter to the Romans, Claudius was the Emperor of Rome (41-54 AD). Under the reign of Claudius, Christians were forced to leave Rome (**Acts 18:2**). As you can see, Christians were not exactly “worthy citizens” to the Roman elite. In fact, they were seen as lowly in society. In fact, the name Christian, began as a derogatory term which the followers of the Way embraced.

After Claudius came Nero. Nero is widely known as one of the most wicked emperors of Rome. He is believed to have killed his thirteen-year-old stepbrother to secure his spot on the throne. He later killed his own mother and wife (allegedly, according to Tacitus). Another rumor of Tacitus is that Nero had intentionally started the “Great fire of Rome” which destroyed a large part of the city. Perhaps his most notable and verifiable offense is his murderous execution of Christians. Nero was a bad man... Rome was a wicked nation in which Christians found themselves residing.

So, what is the point of all of this history? Well, for starters, Paul is writing to Christians who are persecuted, killed, threatened, hungry, discouraged, scared, and even struggling with how to implement their faith. These people are not unlike you and me. They faced different struggles, but similar emotions. Ultimately, they were hurting. And Paul's words in the 8th chapter of Romans are like salve to the soul. Allow me some flexibility with a favorite text as I adapt it to our modern circumstance.

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While pain and suffering certainly do not feel “good”. We know that our heavenly Father is with us through it all. We know that He suffered on our behalf, for our transgressions. He gave us the greatest blessing of all, the hope of eternal life. He has washed away our sins, taken on the burden! Friends, do not let the pain of today, steal the joy of tomorrow. We will not be separated from the love of Christ!