

July 27, 1986

INTRODUCTION

1. Suffering does come to the believer (17b). Both brute and human creation groans waiting for deliverance (vv. 18-23).
2. There are God-given aids to endure suffering as we wait for deliverance: hope (vv. 24, 25), the Holy Spirit (vv. 26, 27), God's purpose (v. 28), and the unfailing eternity-to-eternity work of God (vv. 29, 30).
3. Now, a basic question is raised: "What shall we say to these things?" (all that has been recorded in chaps 3:21-8:30). What conclusions are to be drawn from the facts regarding God's saving work? There three specific replies: 1. God's work (vv. 31b-33). 2. Christ's work (v. 34). 3. Circumstance work (vv. 35-39). Look at the truth:-

1. GOD'S WORK--HIS ADVOCACY v. 31a

Here is a tremendous word. God for us! This is not an "ify" sort of statement. It is not like Israel at Ai who thought God was with them (Josh. 7). It is not like Israel in times of Jeremiah (ch. 21). Ultimately, they went into captivity. It is not like the Pharisee (Lk 18:9-14) for he felt God was with Him. No, these all took for granted that God was with them, but He was not. But the first class condition here dispels uncertainty and doubt. Here is settled conviction and comfort beyond measure. It shows that God is for the believer before the world was made, when it was marred by sin, as Christ in grace took our sin. So here are words of authority--glory to God!

Note: God in nature--He is above us.

God in providence--He is beyond us.

God in law--He is against us.

God in grace--He is for us.

Psalm 48:14--There is no limit to which He will not go for the child of God!

2. GOD'S WORK--HIS PROTECTION v. 31b

The protasis ("if" part of condition) is affirmed to be true. Now the apodosis (the "conclusion" part of a conditional clause) asks a question. It is not "what," but the relative "who" is against us? The hostile forces against us are mainly personal (Eph. 6:11-13; Gal. 5:17), but not wholly so (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

Paul knew the reality of this, for example, at Corinth (1 Cor. 16:). His second inspired epistle to Corinth shows he was maligned, held up to scorn, contempt, and his authority denied (2 Cor. 1:8; 2:9; 3:1, 2; 4:1, 2; 5:12, 13; 6:3-10; 10:8-18); 11:7-9; 21-33; 12:11-18). Others experienced God for them also--Stephen (Acts 7:58-60), James (Acts 8:1, 2), various faithful (Heb. 11:32-40), and Antipas (Rev. 3:13).

Thus, altho the "who" may pursue hostility to the extremes of violence or even martyrdom, they cannot go beyond death (cf. Mt. 10:28; 16:18). Therefore, we boldly proclaim--"since God is for us, who can be against us?"

CONCLUSION

Through all the vicissitudes of life, a believer may boldly affirm--God is for me! Blessed be His Name. It was Martin Luther who, at the Diet of Worms (1521 A.D.) affirmed of the Bible "Here I stand." His enemies shouted "To the fire with Him, to the fire." Shortly afterwards, he was in the Castle at Wartburg where he wrote a most stirring hymn. It reflects the spirit of this great verse.

*"A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing:*

*For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be?*

*Christ Jesus it is He, Lord Sabaoth, His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle."*