

It All Begins with God—"For" [#2]

By Bob Young

God for us. A rich Bible concept -- not easy to grasp. How can this be summarized? God is on our side; God wants us to win; God wants us to succeed. From the reverse side: God is not against us.

God is for us (Rom. 8:32-39). This alters our understanding of God. God is not a celestial policeman waiting to measure us with a long list of prohibitions. God is cheering us on; God protects, guides, helps, sustains, rescues, saves.

God is for us (Rom. 8:32-39). This alters our understanding of life. When God is for us, nothing and no one can successfully oppose us.

Why understanding this idea is important

Because we spend so much time grasping for grace. We do not understand grace. How can we wrap our minds around grace? God is on our side, even when we mess up, even when we have messed up. The gospel message is not, "God will love you if you..." Or, "God will love you if you quit...." Or, "God will love you if you don't do...." The fundamental message of Christianity is that God—in all of his holiness, justice, and love—is for us, creating us to be like him, re-creating us to be like him, helping us be like him.

Because the gospel is positive, not negative. The gospel is what we are "for," not what we are "against." Or better said, the gospel is God for us, not God against us. It is amazing how often Christian faith is defined and understood by what it is against. The central message of Christian faith is about what we are for, because that is the central message of the gospel. God is for us; he is on our side. The gospel message that "God is for us" alters spiritual reality in our lives; it is not about guarantees of health, wealth, and success in this world.

Because it is beyond incredible that God is "for us"! Philippians 2:5-11 is helpful. To understand the depth of the "God is for us" declaration, we have to understand Jesus. Here is the center of the gospel. Here is the supreme evidence of grace.

We cannot really talk about God unless we mention Jesus. We cannot tell about Jesus without mentioning God.

- Jesus existed with God, in the form of God, in the very nature of God, equal with God.
- Incarnation, Jesus emptied himself, he became like us, he assumed human likeness, but even more, he came desiring to serve. Hebrews 1-2 presents Jesus as both Son of God and Son of Man. The whole idea is counter-intuitive.
- Jesus is made like us, in human form, participating fully in the human experience, even dying.
- Jesus comes doing the unexpected—living by a different value system. Jesus humbly submits to death, and even worse, death on a cross. The gospel of God "for us" denies the value systems of the world.
- Jesus comes confronting life's greatest challenges. Victorious living does not guarantee the absence of problems.
- The victory is secure, the victory is won. God exalts Jesus above every other authority.

Why the message that "God is for us" is Good News

- Because we cannot handle our past. We do not know how to undo the past, we are constantly burdened by our failures.
- Because we cannot handle the present—the here and now. We cannot solve life's problems. Life in this world is a puzzle that frustrates us.
- Because we cannot handle the future. We cannot find a fresh start with our own power and efforts. In reality, we are in an impossible dilemma in this world.
- Because God has already handled our past, our present, and our future. He was "playing on our side" before we were born. He has done what we cannot do. With God for us, the victory is assured!