

GOD FOR US.

Rom. viii, 29—39.

THIS chapter contains three subjects. 1st, A living work wrought in us connected with no condemnation. 2ndly, Not merely the work that is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, but the presence of the Holy Ghost himself in us, distinguishing between that which is born of the Spirit, and the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost. 3rdly, Not only what God has wrought *in me*, but what God is *for me*, in his outward operations.

It is the 3rd point which forms the subject of this closing part of the chapter, which omits the work in us altogether, and brings forward the *security*, that is to say, what God is *for us*;—which introduces the sovereign power of God acting in grace for us—"whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." In this passage, sanctification and the whole work of the Spirit is omitted, (while it is fully brought out in the former parts of this chapter,) and the Apostle turns to God's foreknowledge, and what he is and does for them whom he foreknew. And mark, the foreknowledge here is that of *persons*;—it is not said, "what he foreknew" *in them*, but "*whom* he did foreknow."

In the 29th verse, we see what the wonderful thought about us is, that we should be conformed to the image of his Son. There is a spiritual conformity, even here, in the saints: but it does not stop at spiritual conformity, for the predestinating purpose of God was to conform them to Christ himself. In the wonderful purpose of God he had set up the man Christ Jesus, in whom he took all his delight, in his presence in glory. Looking then at Christ as the second man, we find that he has sanctified himself, set himself apart as the one to whom we are to be conformed. He has gone up into glory, and has sat down at the right hand of God, before the church is gathered; and although we do not yet see all things put under him, we see the man Jesus crowned with glory and honour. Now "as we have borne the image of the *earthly*, we shall also bear the image of the *heavenly*;" for God's wonderful thought about us is, not only to bring us into his presence, but that our very bodies even should be conformed to the

likeness of the glorious body of his dear Son, "that he might be the first-born among many brethren." As the brethren of the Lord Jesus, God has not only foreknown the saints, had his purposes and thoughts about them, but God has called them, and through grace, they have listened. God called them—they became partakers before him in blessing—not by ordinances, nor yet by descent, but by his calling them; and here comes in another feature of God's character,—the activities of his own love in calling souls out of this evil world. "Whom he called, them he also justified;" for if God had foreknown these people, he has called them; not to reject them: for he has not only called them, but he himself justifies them;—God himself has done it; for I am not only justified *before* God, but it is God that justifies me. He will not have us in his presence with one sin upon us. It is his doing, to have us with himself according to the purposes of his love and the holiness of his nature. If I am justified in his sight, it is God who justifies me, according to the perfectness with which he does everything. He speaks of it as a great fact, (the inward work being left out here,) as the wondrous basis on which he rests this justification—it is on *what God is*, and on his own work. Indeed it is observable in a most remarkable way all through this Epistle, how every thing is made to rest on *what God is*. Man having been tried in every way, without law, under law, under grace, is brought out and proved to be good for nothing: then God comes in and acts in his own sovereignty according to what *he is*. This shuts out the possibility of anything whatever, be it sin, or Satan, coming in against us,—*God is for us*. This is the grand result which the soul discovers, and the Holy Ghost reasons from. The heart may argue, Why then am I finding all this tribulation if he so loves me,—if he be for me? Everything is made to rest on what God is: on this great leading truth, proved in his sovereign ways to us as sinners, ways rehearsed in the preceding verses, which shew what God is for us; and if God be for us, who can be against us, for who can put himself in competition with God?—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" If you ask a proof of God's being for us, the proof is, he gave his Son. If I come to God, and say, What will he do for such a wretched sinner as I am? Why he has done more than the greatest sinner can ask, more than the greatest saint could think of, for he has given his Son for me; therefore, not only have we done

with every thing that was against us,—Satan, every accuser,—but the very sin that made me tremble, becomes a witness of the extent of the love of him who is “for us.” There it is I have learnt it ; for he has shewn himself for me in justifying me. But if God be thus for us about our sins we may count freely for all the rest. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?”

The Spirit never (as before remarked) reasons upwards from what *man is*, but downwards from what *God is* as known in grace in Christ. Thus God being for us, we are entirely free from the possibility of any charge being brought against us ; for “who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? *It is God that justifieth.*” And mark here, that it is not the elect merely, but that it is *God’s elect*. Well, but the soul says, this may be all very true, but how many things I have to meet :—there is life before me, and all its cares,—the trials of the world, and death before me,—how can I reconcile all this? If God be for me how is it that I have all these things against me? We get the answer to all this in the application of Christ’s love to all our present circumstances. It is not merely the immense truth that God is for us, which the Holy Ghost puts before us ; it adds, that Christ is for us, who came down into all these trials even unto death ; as it is said, “Christ that died ; yea, rather, that is risen again ;” therefore, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” He not only says that nothing shall separate us from the love of God, but he brings it down to our *daily weakness*, saying, “for thy sake we are killed all the day long ;” that in all these daily trials in the world we might be “more than conquerors through *him that loved us.*” But you say, How can this make trials seem for us? Why it is not only that I have got the victory, that “we are more than conquerors,” but we have Christ with us in the combat, who loved us enough to die for us, and has overcome death. All that might pretend to separate me from this love is the demonstration in detail of the interest this love of Christ takes in me. If you say, but Christ is too high up to help me down here ; he is up there, at God’s right hand. Yea, blessed be God, the very Christ that died is risen again, and is at the right hand of God *making intercession for us.* Because he lives I shall live. But if you ask, Won’t death separate me from the love of God? *No ;* Christ died and is risen again. “Things

present"—can they? No; for in these every day trials I learn his love. "Things to come?" No; they are *all* met by Christ. As regards difficulties here, he has overcome the world; as regards another world, things to come will be my participation in his glory. "Principalities and powers"—can they? No; they are but creatures at best, and no mere *created* being can be stronger than God. God is the source and the power of the blessing; and the One who went down under the power of death and Satan, though he could not be holden by it, is now risen again and is at God's right hand in heaven making intercession for us, and by the power of the Holy Ghost brings home the blessing to us, in every detail of daily life. Thus has God completely *shut us up*,—just as Noah was shut up in the ark, and floated over all the trouble; Noah went into the ark, but it was *God that shut him in*.

The great secret in the Epistle is, that man is reduced as low as he possibly could be, that is, to his own real level, being proved to be everything that is bad, feeble, and good for nothing; and then God comes in in grace, and says, that's what God is for you. This gives the heart quietness, and sets the conscience in full liberty, in virtue of the resurrection of Jesus; shewing, that that on which the believer rests is *outside* man altogether—based on the stability of God himself; and brought out in the work and person of Christ; though a real work be wrought in him to enable him to enjoy it. God is *in us*, and *for us*, and has brought down every thing to meet our daily need, in Christ; and we can only adore, and wonder; and yet it ceases to be wonderful when we see it is God's doing: we know he must do something superlatively great to shew the exceeding riches of his grace; what he does returns up to him again *in adoration and praise*:—yet goodness, acting in its own sovereignty, must do something which is above all praise.

LONDON: CAMPBELL, HOLBORN.

R. PICKERING, PRINTER, YORK.