

## “Intercede For: Us”

### **Scripture: Romans 8:26-39**

Graphic: interceding, pleading, begging, bridge

Key Verses: 34 It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Theme: For those who believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in this life and Jesus Christ intercedes with God for us. The basis for everything is God’s love for us. Nothing in this world or any other can separate from that love because of Jesus.

### **1) Introduction**

- a) Open your Bibles with me to Romans, Chapter 8 again, as we finish up this section of the first part of Paul’s letter to the Christians in Rome.
- b) Before we dive in, think with me about a bridge that you’ve seen in your life. Big, small, whatever. Bridges get us from one side of a river to another, usually. They are things of beauty and engineering wonder.
- c) For those who don’t like heights, bridges can be a little scary...especially when they sway in the wind...
- d) This morning, as we hear Paul’s words of encouragement in the difficult parts of life, picture yourself standing on one end of the bridge, ready to go to the other side...
- e) We’ll come back to that bridge in a few minutes...but let’s prepare our hearts and minds to hear God’s Word of Truth this morning...
- f) Let’s pray...

### **2) Scripture**

#### **a) Read verses 26-27**

- i) As I sat in my office this week studying and preparing for this sermon, I experienced something that I have never experienced before as a pastor.
- ii) I sat in front of my computer and had no words...nothing.
- iii) For hours, on Thursday, I started to write this sermon 4-5 times and every time, I lost my train of thought and sat, defeated and discouraged...

- iv) As I read Paul's words to the church in Rome, I began to understand what they were feeling, if only a little. And yet, in my understanding, came the realization that what Paul is trying to say seemed of little help to me.
- v) My willingness to be a vessel for God was thwarted by the fact that I was without words. And the fact that I was without words brought me to the place where I couldn't even pray anymore.
- vi) There are times in our lives when the circumstances we face overwhelm us. There are events and situations that cause us to sink so far from the surface that it seems it will take a miracle for anything positive to come from the circumstance. And my writers block this week is so trivial compared to the real pain and anguish that some people face everyday. And is nothing compared to the trials facing the Roman Christians.
- vii) My mind wandered to the multitude of people I know who have had a spouse die...who have lost a child...who have been burdened to help kids and adults in places they will never visit...who are working for justice in places where there is none...
- viii) And I thought about the frustration and the struggle and the pain...
- ix) And then I read again the words of Paul...that, not only does the Holy Spirit come to us to tangibly connect our spirits, our beings, with Almighty God, but (as if that is not amazing enough) LIKEWISE, the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness...
- x) So that in those times when we can not pray...do not have the words to pray...find it impossible to express the very feelings that are bottled up inside us...we have an intercessor. We have the Holy Spirit sent from God to intercede (underline that in verse 26) for our spirits. To make the connections even where there is no way...with sighs too deep for words!
- xi) I don't know how this sermon will end up, but I know that I have a God who is counting on me to trust the Holy Spirit with whatever words finally get written.
- xii) I know this because I am one of the saints that Paul talks about. Paul uses this term 'saints' here to mean anyone who has a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is not just people who have died...WE are saints now when we accept Christ as Lord and Savior. I want EVERYONE to

hear me when I say that I have one goal in this church and that is to introduce every single person we meet to salvation in Jesus Christ.

- xiii) Because when we meet Jesus, we get the Holy Spirit to intercede (underline that in verse 27), and we get an Abba Father...and we are then equipped for ministry and life...
- xiv) Paul goes on in verse 28 to encourage the saints in Rome...

**b) Read verses 28-30**

- i) **FACT:** all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.
- ii) Let's break that down. How many of the things in life work together for good for those who love God? **ALL**. Any confusion there? **ALL** is pretty clear, right?
- iii) **ALL** things work for **GOOD**. Now, some people who are not Christian love to fanaticize about this notion that God somehow wants to stop the sentence there and claim that all things work for good. Period.
- iv) The new age movement would love for the world to buy into the fallacy that all things work together for good. Like, everything will just work out in the end. I was reminded of that the other day when I saw another bumper sticker that said **COEXIST** on it and had all the world's religious symbols as the letters, the 'T' of course being the cross of Jesus Christ.
- v) Jesus Christ said, "I **AM THE** way, **THE** truth, and **THE** life...anyone who comes to **ME** will have eternal life." Can we live in the same world with everyone who may not agree? Absolutely! Will all things work together for good for everyone no matter what? Not according to Jesus!
- vi) Let's finish the sentence...We **KNOW** that all things work together for god **FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD**. And Paul goes on to explain who those who love God are – those who are called according to his purpose. Those who have been justified because of their belief in Christ.
- vii) Now, Paul is **NOT** saying that we will never have stuff go wrong in our lives. He's stating, emphatically, that because of our salvation in Christ, eventually, ultimately, all things will work for good – meaning we will be saved from anything bad...we will have eternal life with God.

- viii) And Paul goes on to lay out God's plan...to encourage the Roman Christians that God has made a way, from the beginning, for all of us to be saved and to be transformed into the image of Jesus, His Son. SO THAT we can be sisters and brothers with Christ!
- ix) AND, verse 30, those whom God predestined he also called, those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified, he also glorified.
- x) Now, be careful not to get hung up on the wording here. Paul is laying out the process of sanctification, to use John Wesley's words. God knew, even before creation, that there would have to be a way to be in relationship with the creation. And so God determined in advance the pattern into which believers are to be conformed from sin to life. In our case, it's being conformed into the likeness of Christ, the Son.
- xi) And so God determined that He wants us to be in relationship with Him, so he called us. And because he called us, when we answer that call, when we say YES to God, then we are justified (put in a right relationship with God because of Jesus), and when we die, we will be glorified.
- xii) And there are people in our lives that have been down that whole road! They have been called...answered the call...been justified by grace through faith...and have now been glorified at death!
- xiii) This gave the Roman Christians incredible hope and encouragement...and it does to us too.
- xiv) Let's look at verse 31...

**c) Read verses 31-34**

- i) Three rhetorical questions from Paul here...I love Paul's rhetorical questions...
- ii) Number one: If God is for us, who is against us? Now, every time I ask these four questions, the answer is, of course, NOBODY! Right? Paul is leading us to answer his question...
- iii) OK, so, ready? If God is for us, who is against us? (NOBODY!). Right! BECAUSE, God, having not spared his own Son, will now give us all things!

- iv) #2: Who will bring any charge against us? (NOBODY) Right! Because God is the justifier...no one else!
- v) #3: Who shall condemn us? (NOBODY) Right! Because Christ died, was raised, and now intercedes for us.
- vi) If God is the ONE who knows us, calls us, justifies us, glorifies us, intercedes for us, helps us in our weakness, rescues us, does not condemn us, dwells in us, promises to raise us from the dead...if THAT God is FOR US, the WHO is against us?
- vii) And in our human-ness, we're like, "Everything, it seems." The boss is out to get me, the bills are due, the devil is using all His tactics, I had a fight with my wife, the kids are driving me crazy, I'm depressed, broke, addicted, worried, scared, defeated...
- viii) There's plenty of things that are against us...plenty of things that work against the things that WE think God is doing in our lives...
- ix) BUT NONE OF THAT can ever defeat God...can never trick the Holy Spirit...can never be the victor in this world, because God wins...
- x) So even though, there is evil and sin in our lives, we are saved by the blood of Jesus! He intercedes for us!
- xi) So not only is the Holy Spirit interceding for us in THIS LIFE, in our weakness, to pray through us and help us, ... BUT JESUS, the Son, intercedes for us when we face judgment ...and ultimately justifies us before God ...so we can have a relationship with Him for eternity.
- xii) And if that's the case, then we're covered NOW and for ETERNITY...
- xiii) That proves that God loves us so much that He would make a way for us to be in relationship with Him always...
- xiv) Verse 35...nothing can separate us from that love...another rhetorical question...

**d) Read verses 35-39**

- i) What is in existence in this world that can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ? (NOTHING)

- ii) And Paul puts together this grocery list of things that the Roman Christians were facing: hardship...distress...persecution ...famine ...nakedness ...peril...sword.
- iii) Look, here's the deal. If you're an openly professing Christian in Rome in the first century, bad stuff happened to you because of it. You were cutoff from being able to buy or sell anything (that's why Paul talks about famine – no food...nakedness – no fabrics), you would've been mocked and beaten...you would have been threatened with death... hardship was your life.
- iv) We have NOTHING to complain about because of our profession of faith in Jesus. There may come a day...in fact, probably will...when there will be trouble for Christians. But we have nothing to fear...how blessed we are in that regard.
- v) And even for the Christians in Rome, Paul is saying...NOTHING can separate you from the love of God...Jesus loves you!
- vi) In fact, through all those trials (all the persecution and famine and death threats), WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS!! WE (all of us) are more than conquerors because of Jesus.
- vii) Another list...Paul says, I am convinced (this is for sure)...neither death (start big), nor life, angels, rulers, things past, present, or future, powers...(and then because he can't think of other stuff he starts talking about the dimensions)...nor height, nor depth...(and just for good measure)...nor ANYTHING ELSE in ALL CREATION (that'll cover it)...can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **3) Application**

- a) There's a bridge that gets built from our human lives to the eternal existence of God.
- b) And that bridge is there even before we know it. That bridge for each one of us was built by the hands of God at the beginning of time.
- c) But it's not until we put our faith in Jesus Christ that we can cross that bridge.

- d) While we are living, that bridge is the way to life in Christ...to the will of God...to be conformed into the image of God. Our life is on one side of the divide and abundant life with Christ is on the other.
- e) We cross that bridge every time we pray...every time we worship...every time we serve or use our spiritual gifts...every time we are moved by the Holy Spirit...acknowledge and profess God in our lives...that bridge gets crossed all the time when we spend time getting to know Jesus.
- f) In those times when our spirits, by faith, cannot carry us across that bridge, we know from Paul's writings that the Holy Spirit is the one that crosses that bridge for us...intercedes for us...in our weakness.
- g) When we come to the end of our lives, and we cross that bridge one last time, Jesus, this time, is the one that carries us across.
- h) He is our Savior, and by faith we are saved...and when we stand in judgment, Jesus interceded for us.
- i) Throughout our lives, this bridge of faith has four characteristics...
- j) #1 – It's a bridge that works. We love God, we've embraced God's creative purpose for our lives. We can be confident, in spite of evidence to the contrary, that all things — not some things — will work together for good. That is, in the big picture, the pieces will fall into place.
  - i) It shouldn't have worked. But it did and still does. Salvation through Jesus works!
  - ii) When the Holy Spirit and Jesus intercede for us, we can have CONFIDENCE in the promises of God. And those promises are that the Holy Spirit will guide us and connect us to God, and that when we are weak, the Holy Spirit WILL help us. Pray for it. Expect it!
- k) #2 – This bridge stands strong in the storm. Even though "God is for us," there are plenty of storms that come our way that serve to challenge, to weaken the bridge we're crossing. We're buffeted by economic pressures, we're fearful of relationship problems, we're concerned about health issues, we're caught in battles of sobriety, sanity, depression and despair. We worry about terrorism, global warming, house prices, interest rates, crime rates and road rage. This is a bridge that is critical to our well-being — even our salvation.

- i) This bridge must be a bridge that can stand strong in the storm. And it is. Because God is for us. Many things may be against us, but the bottom line is: Nothing can prevail against us!
- l) #3 - This is a bridge that is long enough. Walk this bridge and we'll make it to the other side. Nothing, Paul writes, "will be able to separate us from the love of God" (8:39).
- m) You, no doubt, seen freeway construction jobs with bridges and ramps that lead to nowhere. You look up, and there's this half bridge — a bridge uncompleted. Construction cones warn of the danger. This is a bridge you don't want to be on, and if you are and persist in traveling you'll go flying off into the blue. Might work in movies, but not in life.
  - i) We have to be careful about the bridges we choose. Paul urges us to traverse the bridge of faith. It's a bridge that is long enough to connect us to the love of God, thus making it the biggest suspension bridge in the history of humankind.
- n) Finally, #4 – This bridge is high enough. You don't want a bridge that when the rains come will be flooded and washed out. You don't want a bridge where floating debris can knock out one of the spans. That's why Paul writes: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced 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" (8:37-39).

#### **4) Conclusion**

- a) God intercedes for us because He loves us... And because of Jesus, who God sacrificed in order to give you EVERYTHING, we can have an intercessor...
- b) "Do not fear," says Jesus, "only believe" (Mark 5:36). Jesus is inviting us into a relationship with God that is not going to be shattered by terrorism, warfare, job loss or bankruptcy.
- c) He is inviting us to walk a bridge that will not collapse when it is battered by national turmoil or personal pain. He is asking us to let go of our grip on the things of this world, and get a grip on grace, as Max Lucado would put it.

- d) Bridges are things of beauty. They hold us in thrall. And none are as beautiful as the bridge of faith when traversed by the believer whose feet are shod with courage, whose hands grasp the Word, and whose face beams with the light of heaven.
- e) We all need a bridge, a bridge that works, a bridge that stands strong in the storm, a bridge that is long enough, a bridge that is high enough.
- f) Let's not be afraid to step out.