

When God Gives Up

Romans 8:28-39

By [Dr. Ed Hartman](#)

It is a pleasure again to be before you this evening to explore the depths of God's Word and to revel in the truth that He set before us. This morning we looked at Matthew chapter 24. We talked about the Gospel of the kingdom. We drew one significant conclusion from that verse, Matthew 24:14, and saw the fact that the Gospel is of the kingdom clearly states that we have a King and that King is not you or I but it is the one true King to whom we're called to submit, one before whom we're called to humble ourselves, and even to enter into places of brokenness. It occurred to me that I had a quote by A.W. Tozer from his work, *The Root of the Righteous*. He talks about you and me in this way. He says:

A Christian is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for one whom he has never seen, he talks in a familiar way to someone he cannot see, he expects to go to heaven on the virtue of another, he empties himself in order to be full, admits when he is wrong so he can be declared right, he goes down in order to get up, he's strongest when he is weakest, he's richest when he is poorest, and happiest when he feels the worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep; he sees the invisible, hears the inaudible, and knows that which surpasses knowledge.

True? Do you understand Christianity in that light? I ask that question because of what we touched on this morning. The Christian life, if you are on Christ's mission, will call you to humility, submission, and brokenness. And therein lies the tension because the fact is, we don't want to embrace brokenness, submission, and humility. So therein lies the question. What does God need to do to make us willing to enter into that kind of life? With that question in mind I'd like to direct your attention to Romans chapter 8 and I want to ask the question, "When does God give up?" The question may offend you. It may unnerve you to think that God gives up. We're going to see from the text that He has. Romans 8 starting in verse 28 reading through the end of the chapter:

And we know that in all things God works for good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. Those He predestined He also called, those He called He also justified, those He justified He also

glorified.

What then shall we say in response to this? 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 along with Him graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? Christ Jesus who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is God's Word. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, once again we ask for the intervention of Your Holy Spirit who will not only bring understanding, shedding the piercing light of Your Word to the lens of our conscious, straight to our hearts, but more than that will transform our affections so that we'll love the truth and in the process be changed by it. Don't let us leave the same, Father. Send us forth with a new openness, willingness, even determination to humble ourselves, to submit our wills to Yours, to enter into the places of brokenness, apart from which this mission to which You've called us will not move forward. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

On October 29, 1941, Winston Churchill stood before the students at Harrow School, a school from which he himself had graduated, and he gave the speech from which we draw the often quoted words, "Never give up." I wish I had a British accent with which to read this short quote. He said, "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender, we shall never yield to force, we shall never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy, we shall never give up, never give up, never, never, never, never give up!" It sounds like the appropriate introduction to a missions conference sermon, doesn't it? We are roused by that charge and by that assertion.

GOD GAVE UP HIS SON

But what about God? When does God give up? We just read it, didn't we, in verse 32? Look at it again. "He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up

for us all, how will He not also along with Him graciously give us all things?" Now you may be thinking, "Oh okay, I thought you meant God quit." No, but think of it. God gave up His Son. I'm not sure that strikes you with the force that Paul intended in this passage. It wasn't just the Father who gave up the Son but it was Jesus Himself who gave up Himself. It's all throughout the New Testament, isn't it? Just think about Ephesians chapter 5 verse 2 where Paul writes, "Live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us." Or later in the chapter, verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." The Father gave up the Son. The Son gave up Himself. Unthinkable. We've heard it so often that it no longer staggers us that this actually happened, in real history.

This past October I was paging through the *Clarion Ledger* one Saturday and I was arrested by a photograph I saw and the article attached with it. The article was about a young man by the name of Gilad Shalit. Remember Gilad? Gilad was a nineteen year old kid — opps, young man — nineteen year old young man living in northern Israel, conscripted into compulsory service in the Israeli army. And he was assigned to the northern part of Israel, very near the Gaza Strip. Actually, he was guarding along the fence that separates Israel from the Gaza Strip. And on June 25, 2006 as he was guarding one night, Palestinian commandoes tunneled underneath the fence, opened fire on his unit, killed several Israeli soldiers, and before anyone knew it happened, they grabbed this nineteen year old soldier who didn't know what was going on, pulled him under the fence, and disappeared. And for five years the Israeli government tried to get back Gilad Shalit. They bombed the Gaza Strip, they forced greater pressure upon them, they sent in their intelligence experts. Nothing could be done to find and rescue Gilad Shalit. Five years he suffered as a captive until October 18, 2011. He wasn't rescued, he was exchanged. And you know how prisoner exchanges work, right? There is a prisoner that we have and you have one of our people and so we release this prisoner and you release your prisoner who we really want back. And you know, you've seen the movies where they cross this bridge and step by step they go across — one for one. And there's a trade, an exchange.

But that's not what happened. Gilad Shalit, now a twenty-four year old captive, was exchanged for one thousand and twenty-nine Palestinian prisoners languishing in Israeli jails, prisoners, most of whom sentenced to life in prison. Collectively, these one thousand twenty-nine Palestinian prisoners, even terrorists, were responsible for the deaths of over five hundred Israeli civilians, non-combatants, convicted, sentenced to life and told you'll never go free. And yet to get one twenty-four year old Gilad Shalit out of Palestine captivity, the Israeli government gave up one thousand twenty-nine convicted Palestinian criminals and terrorists. What was that about? What were they thinking? The question intrigued me and so I began reading to figure out what is it about the Israeli government? They do this repeatedly. As a matter of fact, the ratio is somewhere in the neighborhood of eight hundred prisoners on average the

Israelis give up to get back one of their soldiers or citizens out of captivity. For the last twenty years that's the average. The Israeli government gives up eight hundred captives to get back one. What is that about?

Here's what I learned. Pidyon Shvuyim — this is the principle deeply embedded in Jewish culture that says, “Our people are so important to us that we’ll do anything to get them back. The worth of one prisoner is so high we’ll go to any lengths to get them back.” Pidyon Shvuyim. It's translated, “The Redemption of Captives,” and it's embedded in their culture. It goes all the way back to God's people being redeemed, brought back out of captivity after four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. It goes back even further to Abram going after Lot, his nephew, who is captured by an overwhelming force of five invading kings who took Lot and his family captive. And Abram, with three hundred and eighteen men, goes after this overwhelming force and he brings them back. It goes all the way back to the foundation of the world where we learn that Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. You understand that in the covenant of redemption before one word of creation was spoken, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit agreed, “We’re going to create a perfect world, we're going to create people in our own image, and they will rebel and it will cost not one thousand twenty-nine prisoners to give up to buy them back, it will cost the life of God the Son to buy them back.” “He who spared not His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, give us all things?”

GOD WILL NEVER GIVE US UP

Think about it. Why did God do that? On one level, it was the only way to get us back, but it goes farther because God gave up His Son to assure us, assure us that He'll never give us up, further, that He'll never give up on us. What God gave up was so precious God said, “I want you to see what I am willing to give to bring you back, to put you back right. And with this assurance I want you to know that I will never ever give up on you.” Let me tell you what, I need to be reminded of that — in the places of my failure, in the places of my guilt and shame, in the places where I have to say with the apostle Paul, “The good that I want to do I don't end up doing; the evil I don't want to do, that's what I keep on doing.” How can God still love me? How can God still say, “I find pleasure in you and rejoice over you with singing”? How is that possible? God says, “Look what I gave up to bring you back and ask yourself, ‘Am I ever going to give up on you?’” This is what the passage says. “He who spared not His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also along with Him graciously give us all things?” Now please understand this is not the prosperity gospel — God will give us all things. What Paul is saying is that God will go to whatever lengths necessary to complete what He's begun, to finish the work that He started in your life and mine. Whatever lengths necessary.

It gets even better. Verse 1 Paul says, “Therefore there is now no condemnation

for those who are in Christ Jesus.” He picks up on that in verse 33. “Who then will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies” meaning that there is nothing that can be done to you or said about you that will change God's perspective towards you. It's done. It's done. He goes even further and says God is for us. Verse 31 — “What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?” If you were really convinced that this was true, why would you ever worry? Why would I? If I really believe that God is for me and nothing can stand in the way of His purposes to complete what He has begun, why would I ever ring my hands in anxiety? Paul goes on to say that He is permanently and unchangeably for us. Verse 35 — “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” God is permanently for us. In the court of law, contracts can be broken, adoptions can be undone, covenants can be violated, but God's purposes to finish what He's begun are unchangeable. And He assures us of it when He points to what He gave up to bring back the captives.

GIVE UP

I need to be reminded of this over and over and over again. Why? I'll show you the outline. God gave up His Son, that's number one. Number two - to assure us that He'll never ever give up on us. What's the response, application? Number three — give up. Let me say it differently. God surrendered His Son to assure us that He'll never ever surrender us. Application — surrender. Unclench your white-knuckled grip on those things that you say, “I have to have this. I have to have my family nearby. I have to be healthy. I have to be desirable. I have to be well-employed. My kids have to get into the right school. I have to be understood. I have to have enough money. I have to have enough appreciation.” My mother, who was the most godly person I've ever known, now with the Lord, said to me one day, “Ed, God has called me to surrender all of my rights and the most difficult right for me to surrender is the right to be understood. I don't want people to misunderstand my motives, to misunderstand what I was thinking or what I was doing or why. And God says even that I have to let go.” The Gospel of the kingdom calls us to mission. We are proclaimers and yet there are a thousand things to which we cling and say, “Without this I cannot receive life joyfully.” We render ourselves ineffective for the mission.

Look, geography doesn't matter. God has called all of us to missions — some here some there. We're all on a mission. The question is, “How are you going to enter into those places of humility, submission, and brokenness that this mission will require?” Parenthesis — I realize that I've used the word brokenness repeatedly and I've not defined it. Let me give you the definition. Best definition I've found I believe is by Nancy Lee DeMoss. Short paragraph:

The brokenness to which God calls us is a lifestyle of agreeing with God about the true condition of my heart and life as He sees it. It's a lifestyle of unconditional surrender of my will to God's, a heart attitude that says, "Yes, Lord." Brokenness is the shattering of my self-will so that the Spirit of the Lord will be released through me. It is a response of humility and obedience to the conviction of the Word and Spirit of God and as the conviction of God's Word is continuous, so must the brokenness be continuous.

Let me reiterate one phrase: "Brokenness is a lifestyle of unconditional surrender of my will to God's, a heart attitude that says, 'Yes, Lord.'" Question — what are the places where God is calling you to surrender and you're saying, "No, Lord," which is a contradiction of terms? You either say, "Lord," or you say, "No," but you can't put the two together. Where are the places where God is calling you to unclench your white-knuckled grip and say, "Yes, Lord, even this." Let me be honest, I don't like what I'm telling you. There are places in my life where I've said, "No, no," and now I'm finding God is breaking my fingers to help me unclench my white-knuckled grip. And it's not a pleasant process. What about you? I've been very much helped by the writings of Helen Roseveare. The first time I heard Helen speak I was a student at Columbia Bible College in Columbia, South Carolina, 1985. And this already aging woman stood before the student body and talked about her experience. Do y'all know much about Helen Roseveare? I'll give you a little background for those of you who don't.

Helen was a medical doctor called into mission. She was sent to the Congo and she began doing medical missions there, established a clinic, a medical compound, a school for training medical professionals there in Africa. They were treating people there in Africa - in a radius of two hundred miles they were coming to her clinic. Brilliant woman; gave up a potentially thriving practice, gave up the prospects of being married. As a single woman throughout all of that work, and then in the early 1970's the Simba uprising occurred and her compound was overrun by African rebels, ruthless men who took her and others captive and held her, held them, for five months. She was beaten brutally to the extent that the teeth were knocked out of her head — correction — stomped out of her head. Violated repeated in the worst possible ways by Africa rebels. Five months she was held until she was rescued and she was taken back to England. Then she returned back to this, to the rubble of what was her clinic and they rebuilt it all and over time there was another uprising only this time it wasn't rebels, it was her own medical staff who accused her of embezzling money. As she was taken to trial and people whom she had loved and trained and served were now bearing witness against her accusing her of using money that every month came in and was spent entirely for the mission and she was being accused of wrongfully using those funds.

She just released a book last month, last year rather, called, *Enough*. I read it last week. Amazingly it parallels so closely to Tullian Tchividijan's book, *Jesus*

Plus Nothing Equals Everything. Both asked the question, “What are you holding on to and about what are you saying, ‘Without this I have nothing’ even though Jesus is entirely yours?” Helen uses an illustration — you may have heard it before — but I want to unpack it because it resonated with me as I read it. This illustration is actually in her book called, *Digging Ditches*, commend it to your reading. But she, on many occasions stood before a group of people and held up a long stemmed rose, beautiful and fragrant in itself. And she says, “You know, this represents my life. I want to be like this rose, admired, desired, but you know it's a transient beauty and therefore a transient admiration and desire that's received.” And she said, “I found in my life that God looks at me, this rose, and He begins plucking things. And I say, ‘God, why? Why would You do this? Why would You take — look at the petals on the ground. The beauty that was here, it's gone. Why would You take away the prospect of my being married? Why would You take away the prospect of my having children? Why would You move me away from my family and why would You allow my mother to die while I was away from her when I promised I'd be there for her? Why would You strip me of all those things that are so important to me?’” And she said for the longest time God didn't give any explanation other than stripping me further. But she took out a knife and began peeling the bark off that long stemmed rose and she said, “How can this be? The one thing that identified me as once having been this beautiful rose, even that now is on the ground. The one thing that protected me from being vulnerable is gone. Now there's nothing but this naked white stick. Everything's stripped.” She said, “It was only then that I realized God never intended me to be an admired, desired rose. All along God intended to make me a sharpened arrow which He could use for the accomplishment of His purposes.”

My insides war against that image because there are things in this life that are so precious to me to think that these things would be taken away from me and I would be asked, “Am I enough for you still?” I shudder at the loss of those things that are precious. I shared this story at our lunch table today. My mother went to be with the Lord, died of cancer in 2005. The last conversation I had with her was at the airport. The last coherent conversation before she went into the last decline. But we stood in the airport, Emily and I, kids and I were about to fly back to Romania and she wrapped her arms around me and held me. And I felt her body begin shaking as she sobbed silently. And I didn't know what to say or what to do. I knew she was in a decline; I knew it was cancer that could not be reversed apart from the Lord's direct intervention. And finally she pushed me away, held me in her hands by my elbows, tears streaming down her cheeks she said one phrase and turned and walked away. She said, “The Lamb is worthy.” That was the last thing she ever said to me, face to face.

What is it that you're clinging to right now and God has said, “You've got to surrender this. This is not your life. This is not your future. This is not your one true hope.” What is it that God says, “Just give it up”? You can't do it. You can't give it up unless of course you understand that God gave up His Son as the first missionary to assure you that He'll never ever give you up and He'll never ever

give up on you. Once you have that clear in your head you're free to give up anything else. Do you understand? I'm still working on understanding that. I trust the Lord will bring that home to your heart as He's bringing it home to mine.

Let's pray.

Now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known, but we know that when He, Jesus, appears, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as He is pure. These are the words of the apostle John, the disciple whom You loved, Lord Jesus. We want them to be our words. We want them to be our hope, the hope of seeing Jesus face to face being perfectly conformed to His image and now committing ourselves, purifying ourselves, just as You, Lord Jesus, are pure. Apart from Your assuring us that we are safe and secure in the eternal commitment that You're completing what You've begun, we're afraid. We recoil from being vulnerable. We recoil from being weak. We recoil from being empty, from being called to brokenness, to relinquishing, to giving up. We recoil from being called to give up our rights to be perceived as our rights, and that we believe are our entitlements. Father, forgive us. Embolden us to walk forward in humble dependence upon the one who gave up Himself for us. Free us to surrender anything that stands in the way of Your using us effectively in the mission to which You have called us. We pray this all in Jesus' precious, holy name, amen.

Would you please stand for the benediction and then we'll sing the fourth stanza of "O Father, You Are Sovereign"?

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all who love and trust our Lord Jesus with sincerity. Amen.

©2013 First Presbyterian Church.

This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template.

Should there be questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any website error to be with the webmaster/transcriber/editor rather than with the original speaker. For full copyright, reproduction and permission information, please visit the First Presbyterian Church Copyright, Reproduction & Permission statement.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to [Biblical Perspective Magazine](#)

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).