

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Romans 8:31-39

The apostle Paul likely wrote his letter to the Romans in 57 A.D., at the conclusion of his third missionary journey. At the time of writing, Paul had not yet visited Rome, but he sincerely wanted to go **“so that,”** in his own words, **“I may impart some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith,”** Romans 1:11-12.

The theme of Romans is clearly stated in 1:17. **“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed; a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”** This theme is carried out in almost every chapter of Romans, from the righteousness of God that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ—His sinless life and atoning death; to the righteousness of God that should be evident in our daily lives: words, deeds, thoughts, choices, priorities, relationships, and even the way in which we respond to personal problems and injustices.

So many cherished and familiar passages come from Paul’s letter to the Romans. **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes,”** Romans 1:16. **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus,”** Roman 3:23-24 **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,”** Roman 6:23. **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved,”** Romans 10:12. **“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,”** Romans 10:17.

Yet, perhaps the pinnacle of Romans is its eighth chapter; a chapter which opens with the comforting assurance, **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,”** Romans 8:1; a chapter which closes by calling all believers in Christ **“more than conquerors,”** Romans 8:37.

More than conquerors.” Yes, but I don’t feel like a conqueror. I don’t look like a conqueror. When I glance in the mirror I don’t see a conqueror—Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great or Napoleon Bonaparte or General Douglas MacArthur. I see a man with wrinkles, bifocals, and age spots. I see a man who would be deliriously happy to win an occasional victory; or at least to have one day when one thing went right. How can I be a conqueror when I’m lying in a hospital bed or struggling with constant pain? How can I be a conqueror when I can’t pay bills or improve a troubled marriage?

How can I be a conqueror when I drive an old, broken-down jalopy or need a walker to cross the living room?

Yet, notice what Paul confidently called us in Romans 8:37. He did not call us copers or contenders, scrappers or survivors, people who win occasional victories; or for that matter, even mere conquerors. What did he call us? **“In all these things we are more than conquerors.”**

The Greek verb Paul used, HUPER-NIKAO, found only here in the New Testament, literally means “to win an overwhelming victory.” No stalemates. No draws. No surrenders. Additionally, the apostle placed this Greek verb in the present tense; the tense of ongoing, uninterrupted action. In doing so, Paul was declaring that you and I are always **“more than conquerors;”** that there is never a time, condition or circumstance in which you and I are not **“more than conquerors.”**

How could the apostle make such a statement? Was he confused? Did he have a different definition of victory? Was his life easier than ours? Far from it. Listen to Paul’s description of his own life and ministry in 2 Corinthians 11: **“I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move, I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from the Gentiles...I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.”**

Read this autobiography carefully and you’ll find that it contains the same difficulties Paul listed in Romans 8:35: **“trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword.”** And yet the apostle still insisted **“in all these things we are more than conquerors.”** How? Why? Did Paul have some innate ability or strength that we don’t have? Did he know someone or something we don’t know? Of course not. But then, **“In all these things we are more than conquerors”** is not the whole verse, is it? In fact, it’s not even the most important part of the verse. The most important part lies in the five glorious words that follow: **“through Him who loved us.”** Paul was more than a conqueror because he relied on Almighty God to do the conquering.

These were Paul’s problems. What are yours? What problems are you facing together: health problems, financial problems, marital problems; problems with guilt or temptation? Do you feel more like you’ve been conquered than a conqueror? Are you

struggling to understand something that happened to you or a loved one? Are you worried how God will provide for you, or that God may love you less than He used to? Are you tired of expecting the worst from God instead of rejoicing in His very best? If so, ask yourself the questions Paul asked and answered in today's text. In fact, *personalize* the questions.

The first question is in verse 31: “If God is for me, who can be against me?”

The emphasis of this verse is not on “if” but on “God.” In the original language, the word God—THEOS in Greek—has a definite article and occupies a place of extreme importance in the sentence. The sense is: ‘If the one and only God is for me, who can be against me?’ The same one and only God that we confess Sunday after Sunday in liturgy and creeds, saying, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth”—and then promptly forget what we confessed by the time we exit church, turn right or left on Highway 12, and drive off toward our next problem, next worry, next dilemma. What happened to God? What happened to almighty?

“If God is for me, who can be against me?” This is not a difficult question or a multiple choice question or an unanswerable question. If the Lord God is everything the Bible declares Him to be—all powerful, all-knowing, and always present; eternal, truthful, faithful, unchanging, and full of compassion and grace; the God for whom **“all things are possible,”** as Jesus declared in Matthew 19:26—then there is only one answer to this important question. And the answer is “no one.”

If God is for me, then NO ONE can be against me. NO ONE can defeat me. NO ONE can change God's good and gracious plans for my life. In fact, the Greek phrase **“who can be against us?”** is more literally ‘who is against us?’ From God's perspective, the opposition does not even exist. It is already conquered.

How did Abraham wait for twenty years for the birth of his promised son Isaac, when all of his personal circumstances—his age, his body, the barrenness of his wife Sarah—insisted that his predicament was hopeless? The answer: He trusted in God. God's power and faithfulness were all that mattered to him. And God's power and faithfulness should be all that matter to us. Paul wrote in Romans 4, speaking of Abraham: **“He did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised.”**

Is there a single problem you and I are facing today, whether financial, physical, spiritual, emotional, marital—no matter how serious or threatening—that is more powerful than Almighty God? Of course not. If God is for us, no one and nothing can

truly defeat us. Even amid sorrow, pain, and loss, we still stand. We still overcome. We are still more than conquerors.

The second question is in verse 32: ‘If God gave His one and only Son for me, will He not give me everything else I need?’ If the first question has to do with God’s power, the second question has to do with God’s willingness. And ironically, here we have the most worries, don’t we? We are willing to confess that God has the power to help, but we’re not as certain of God’s willingness to help.

When our problems and worries are not resolved according to our strict timetable and specifications, we quickly assume that God must not care about us; or that God must be busy elsewhere; or that God has better things to do. I have felt this way at times; and I am sure you have too. But if you and I don’t believe that God is willing to help us, that God really is on our side—for us, not against us; personally involved in every detail of our lives—how can we be **“more than conquerors?”** Instead, we will see ourselves as alone and helpless in a troubled, chaotic world.

O heavenly Father, forgive us for feeling this way. Forgive us for praising Your power while doubting Your willingness. In today’s text the apostle Paul offers us the supreme, indisputable, and irrevocable proof of God’s willingness to help us; that God is always for us. And what is that proof? **The cross of Jesus Christ**; the sacrifice of God’s one and only Son.

You know that God has the power to help you. But if today you find yourself doubting God’s willingness to make you **“more than a conqueror,”** remember who willingly died for your sins and salvation. Ask yourself this question: ‘If God sacrificed His one and only Son for me, will He fail to give me anything else I need: a loaf of bread, a change of clothes, a means of transportation, a stronger faith, wisdom to know and do His will?’ Again, the answer is a resounding “no”.

The third question is in verse 33: ‘If God justifies me, who can condemn me?’ Few things make us feel less like conquerors than the glaring knowledge of our own sins, weaknesses, and guilt; our inability to please God despite our best efforts to do so. “Why was I so mean and hurtful? Why did I use such language? Why did I surrender to that same temptation? Why did I turn away from that person in need? Why did I doubt God’s goodness and grace?”

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?” Paul asked in verse 33. Yet, there is no shortage of those willing to bring such charges. Satan, whose very name means ‘Accuser.’ Our own conscience. People we may have accidentally or deliberately hurt. And in a real sense, we bring charges against

ourselves each time we confess: “Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed.”

Paul himself hardly sounded like “**more than a conqueror**” when he lamented in Romans 7: “**I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing...What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?**” Yet, how does he continue? Not with a whimper or surrender or a moan of defeat; rather, a cry of overwhelming victory: “**Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!**”

That we sin, yes. That we deserve only punishment, yes. But here too we are “**more than conquerors**” through Jesus Christ, who not only died for us; who not only rose again for us; but who is even now interceding for us at the right hand of God. The world may condemn us. Satan may condemn us. We may even condemn ourselves. But as Paul declared in Romans 8:1—and if you are struggling with guilt, listen carefully to this: “**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**” And to me that sounds like a HUPER-NIKAO, an overwhelming and ongoing victory.

The fourth question is in verse 34: ‘If God loves me, who can separate me from that love?’ When Paul asks, “**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?**” he is not talking about our love for Christ, but Christ’s love for us. Is there anything in our lives—life or death, height or depth, ups or downs, good times or bad, job loss, sickness, troubled relationships, global terrorism, or even the fury of hell itself—that can separate us from the love God has for us in Jesus Christ? And again, as with all the previous questions, the answer is “no.” And the proof is in the cross.

The Bible clearly records the cruelties and atrocities Jesus willingly endured to save us from our sins—the mocking, spitting, beating, flogging, crown of thorns, nails, and crucifixion. Yet, so great was His love for us that He permitted nothing to dissuade Him from going to the cross. In fact, in Hebrews 12 we read, “**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**”

That nothing dissuaded Jesus from the cross is the absolute proof that “**nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” Not getting old or sick. Not losing a loved one. Not struggling with finances. Not

weaknesses or failures. Not time. Not distance. Not difficult family matters. From God's own word we have the certainty that even when things go wrong in our lives, and our world seems so crazed and chaotic, Jesus Christ is still and always loving us. And this is what makes us **“more than conquerors.”**

One question still remains: ‘What shall I say in response to this?’ This is actually the first question Paul asked in today's test, verse 31. But I saved it for last because it is both a fitting introduction and a proper conclusion. When Paul asked this question—“What shall we say in response to this?”—he may have been referring to the preceding verses of Romans 8, or the preceding chapters of the entire letter to the Romans and all the doctrines and applications those chapters contain.

Yet, in a real sense you and I ask this same question daily. Every day we face new or existing problems. And every problem forces us to ask, “What shall I say in response to this? How will I respond to this? Will I wave the white flag of surrender? Will I drag myself through the day, acting as if I had no hope and no Savior? Will I go on expecting the very worst from God? Or will I press on triumphantly, saying with the apostle, **“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us?”**

Remember this: In Romans 8, the apostle Paul is not telling us how to become conquerors. He's telling us to live like the **“more than conquerors”** we already are in Jesus Christ.