



Romans 8:31-39

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What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God

who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The accident happened on February 10 at 6:40 A.M. Suddenly, a dog darted into the early morning traffic on Highway 17/92 in Lake Alfred. The car in front of me slowed and stopped. I slowed and stopped. However, the two cars behind me did not slow and stop. An instant later, metal crunched. Everything in my front seat was in the rear seat. My head snapped back and forth. My glasses flew. My coffee spilled. Both of my airbags deployed, and from an insurance perspective, my car was totaled.

Later, as my son Andrew and I surveyed the damage, he said, "Dad, aren't you glad your high school class isn't having another reunion?" "Why?" I asked. He answered, "So you don't have to tell old classmates how your life turned out." From there the conversation meandered into more serious questions like "Why did God let this happen to you, Dad? Aren't you His servant?" and "What will you do without your car?" and "Do you really think God will provide for you?" and "Is it that God doesn't love you as much as He used to?" Suddenly, I realized that Andrew and I weren't simply talking about me. We were talking about the essentials of today's text—about the apostle Paul's contention that "*in all these things we are **more than conquerors***." [v. 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, age spots, and thinning hair. I see a man who would be deliriously happy to win an occasional victory, or at least to have one day when one things went right. How can I be a conqueror when I'm lying in a hospital bed or dying from cancer 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, *hyper-nikao*, is found only here in the New Testament and it literally means "to win a surpassing 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. 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: ***"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"*** (2 Corinthians 11:23-27 NIV).

Read this autobiography carefully and you'll find that it contains the same difficulties Paul listed in today's text: ***"trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword."*** [v.38] 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 you don't have? Did he know someone you don't know? Of course not. ***"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 God to do the conquering.

An auto accident was the context for my approach to today's sermon. What's yours? Health problems? Financial difficulties? Troubled relationships? Guilt? Temptation? Do you feel more like you've been conquered than a conqueror? Are you struggling to understand why something happened to you? 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. Personalize them.

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 the "if" but on the "God." In the original language, the word God—*theos*—has a definite article and occupies a place of extreme importance in the phrase. The sense is: "If the one and only God is for us, who can be against us?" This is the same one and only God whom 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 too often forget by the time we exit church and drive off toward our next problem, next worry, next dilemma. What happened to God? What happened to "almighty"?

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" 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 us, then no one can be against us. No one can defeat us. No one can change God's good and gracious plans for us. 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? He trusted in God. God’s power and faithfulness were all that mattered. 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”*** (Romans 4:20-21 NIV).

Is there a single problem you and I are facing today, whether financial or physical, spiritual or emotional, auto accidents or “Dad, what will you do without a car?”—no matter how serious or threatening—that is more powerful than Almighty God? Of course not! If God is for us, no one and no thing can truly defeat us. Even amid sorrow, pain, and loss, we still stand. We still overcome. We are still conquerors.

The second question is in verse 32: “If God gave me His one and only Son, 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. 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 always as certain of God’s willingness to help.

When our problems and worries are not resolved according to our timetable and strict 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 perhaps 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 and 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, undeniable, and irrevocable proof of God’s willingness to help us. And what is it? 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 over any trouble or hardship, look at the cross. Remember who willingly died their 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” Again, the only 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, and 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?”

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?” Paul asked in verse 33 (NIV). 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 thee that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against thee 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?”*** (Romans 7:18ff NIV). 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!” (Romans 7:25).

That we sin, is true, yes. That we deserve only punishment, is true, 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.”*** 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, 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? Again, as with all the previous questions, the answer is “No,” and the proof is in the cross.

So great is Christ’s love for us that He permitted nothing to dissuade Him from 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”*** (Hebrews 12:1-3).

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 being a small Christian congregation. Not weaknesses or failures. Not time. Not distance. Not changing church buildings. Not automobile accidents. 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 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. I saved it for last because it is both a fitting introduction and a proper conclusion. When Paul asked this question, 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. Romans 1:16, ***“I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes”*** (NIV). What shall we say in response to this?

Or Romans 3:23-24, ***“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”*** (NIV). What shall we say in response to this?

Or Romans 6:23, ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** What shall we say in response to this?

Or Romans 8:1, ***“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** What shall we say in response to this?

Yet, in a real sense you and I ask this same question daily. Every day we face new or existing problems. Every problem forces us to ask, “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?”***

In Romans 8, Paul is not telling us *how* to become conquerors. He’s telling us to *live* like the ***“more than conquerors”*** we already are in Christ Jesus. In His holy name, Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:7 ESV) Amen.