

Romans (8:31-39)

More Than Conquerors

Part 39 – June 19, 2005



ON OUR SIDE

Paul stated that creation *groans*, Spirit-filled believers *groan*, and God himself *groans* on our behalf. (8:22-26)

Yet, in the midst of all this misery, we can *know* that in *all* these things God is working for the good of those who've been called according to his purpose. (8:28)

- That purpose is to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. (8:29)
- He's refining us (like silver) so we'll reflect His image.

Armed with foreknowledge (time in 3-D) of every permutation of every person's preference and choice, God arranged every situation and circumstance to achieve this sovereign goal. (8:30)

- Every detail was predestined (i.e. preset) at creation.

And so, though our bodies are in bondage to decay, and creation has been subjected to chaos, to the justified and glorified it's like childbirth: a pain that leads to life and joy!

Let's read the first of five rhetorical questions:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? -
Romans 8:31 NIV

Q: What's the obvious answer?

A: NO ONE!

Remember as a kid, dividing up into teams to play a game; and how you always wanted the biggest, strongest, or fastest kid on your side? Well, this is the ultimate version of that! If God is on *my* side, who cares who else is against me?!

And there *are* people (and powers) against us (we can be unloved, disrespected, robbed, cheated, lied to, and gossiped about) but those things intended for harm, God re-intended for our benefit!

- Every enemy unwittingly becomes my ally.



GOD'S SACRIFICE

In this way, it's absolutely impossible, for someone to be *successfully* against a faithful child of God.

Q: Do you have any trouble believing and accepting that?

Paul expected some of his readers to have a hard time truly trusting the truth of this teaching ... so he challenges any doubt with this next - very logical - rhetorical question:

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? - *Romans 8:32 NIV*

Do you see Paul's logic? If you believe that God didn't withhold the life of his own Son on your account, then it should be easy to believe that he wouldn't withhold these things that are minor by comparison.

Let's say you're very wealthy. Your younger sister is sick, but your money can't help; she needs your kidney. So you undergo the surgery and make the sacrifice that saves her life. Now, if she couldn't afford the anti-rejection medication, and you easily could, would you refuse to help her out? Of course not; it would nullify and forfeit the whole point of your compassion, and benevolence, and love.

Paul is being rather blunt. He's saying, if you're feeling discouraged when life is against you, just use your head: God won't waste the whole point of His sacrifice.



GOD'S COURTROOM

But perhaps you doubt this truth, not because you lack faith in God, but because of feelings of unworthiness. Let's read question, number three:

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. - *Romans 8:33 NIV*

Q: Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?

A: Obvious answer, number three: NO ONE!

You might say: Well actually, my wife (or husband) and my own conscience "bring charges against me" all the time! And the Bible tells us that Satan accuses us.

Q: So, what does Paul mean?

A: None of these charges will *stick* in the court of heaven.

That's why he quickly adds: "It is *God* who justifies".

God is in charge of my *worthiness*, not me. Others might bring charges, but in the Supreme Court of the universe, you've already been acquitted and reckoned as righteous. You've been justified by the judge!

Who is he that 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. - *Romans 8:34 NIV*

Q: “Who is he that condemns?” Satan? Other people? You yourself?

A: Actually, it's God.

Satan might accuse; people might accuse; your conscience might accuse; but only God can *condemn*. And if you've been justified by the judge, these accusations are an attack on *his* grace!

Picture God's courtroom. You're sitting there, you know you're guilty, you're dreading the sentence, and your future is over. The prosecution makes some horrible accusation ... and they're not even exaggerations! The Supreme Judge says, “Any objections?”

- Then Jesus raises his hand ... his *pierced* hand.
- God says, “Sustained! In fact, *redeemed!* Case dismissed.”

The condemnation that belonged to us (because of our sin) was put on Jesus, and the righteousness that belonged to Jesus (because of his perfect obedience) was put on us. He is the living *evidence* and *witness* for the ground of our salvation, providing eternal intercession at God's right hand. Paul is referring to a Psalm of David:

The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” - *Psalm 110:1 NIV*

It's a statement of triumph and rule and authority. But there's something more here. In the OT there were no chairs in the Temple. The priest never sat down because his work was never finished. He was continually sacrificing for the sins of the people. But from the cross, our “High Priest” prayed, “It is finished.”

- Jesus sits because the job is done!

There's no higher court, there's no higher authority, and there's no overturning, overruling, or appealing his decision.



MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Now Paul delivers a final rhetorical question to those who might still doubt the Lord's nearness in our chaos.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? - *Romans 8:35 NIV*

Paul is asking his readers to decide which of these has the power to overrule the all-powerful love of our Savior. If you doubt his generosity, remember his sacrifice. If you doubt your worthiness, remember his authority. And if you doubt because you falsely believe that God will take away all of your misery in this present age, remember his Word:

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. - *Romans 8:36-37 NIV*

That's Psalm 44:22, and it's referring to the Jews. And Paul is reminding them of a great truth. Following God is not about escape, it's about triumph!

That's why Paul says, "in all these things". God's love doesn't remove us from suffering but he unites with us in the midst of our misery in a way that has eternal consequences.

Q: What does it mean to be: "more than conquerors"? How can you be *more* than a conqueror? What *more* is there ... go back and kick 'em?!

Think about the Wizard of Oz. Remember, when they threw the bucket of water on the witch, and she melted? What if, right then, the credits rolled? It certainly wouldn't be the classic tale that it is.

On the other hand, what if they took a Yellow Cab to the Emerald City; the wizard said: "Brains? Heart? Courage? It's all free; I'll tap my wand." ... CREDITS ROLL!?

We're hardwired to comprehend and appreciate that they had to go through their trials in order to learn to *recognize* and *value* what they had all along.

- It's a classic because they became "more than conquerors"!
- They became aware of great insights, and changed by truth.

God doesn't want us to settle for conquering alone; just get through the problem ... AND CREDITS ROLL! There's an insight and a confidence God wants us to gain from facing our foes. Paul learned it. In fact, that list - trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword - that's his personal testimony. *2 Cor 11:23-27*

Let's end with what Paul learned:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither 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. - *Romans 8:38-39 NIV*

- Paul became *more* than a conqueror!