

## More Than Conquerors

✦ “I am convinced....” (vv.35-38a)

✦ “through him who loved us” (vv.37-39)

In the Name of Christ Jesus our living Hope, dearly redeemed brothers and sisters:

Last Sunday I asked, “Did you figure it out?” I had planned to quote the favorite Bible passage on which all God’s promises rest. Surveys I’ve seen over the years show that people say Romans 8:28 is their second most favorite passage, but their favorite is John 3:16: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** (John 3:16 NIV84) Meditating on Romans 8, the Great Victory Chapter of the Bible, these past weeks you realize God’s eternal love in Christ is why we Christians are justified sinners, not afraid to live or to die. No matter how hard life gets, **“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”** (Romans 8:28 NIV84) Paul finishes this victory chapter soaring on the wings of the Spirit into God’s incomparable, insuperable, inseparable love. Today he calls us, “Super Conquerors.” We are **More Than Conquerors** in Christ. Paul confesses...

✦ “I am convinced....” (vv.35-38a)

It took a lot of convincing for Paul. When he was a young “Saul of Tarsus,” Christians hid from him. By his own admission Paul was **“once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man.”** Yet, Paul also wrote to Timothy, **“I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.”** (1 Timothy 1:13 NIV84) God did not owe us the first smile, much less a second chance. Our selfish hypocrisy, wanting other people to thank us when we are so ungrateful to God? All this gives God plenty of reason to crush us like a bug and walk away. I’m amazed how hard core environmentalists can put their finger on the fact that mankind has brought much hurt to this planet. But they can’t trace it back to Adam’s Fall into sin or see the Savior God sent to save the planet as John 3:16 tells us. Only by revelation from God can these facts be known. And only by God’s grace can any of us say with Paul: **“I am convinced....”**

In today’s power-text, Paul starts off with a list of *seven*. The Bible’s number *seven* and lists of *seven* are connected with *God’s judgment*. *God’s judgment against* someone is *perfect condemnation*. *God’s judgment for* someone is *perfect acquittal*. Because of Jesus and the faith God has given us to trust Jesus as our Savior, this whole list of *seven* comes out in our favor.

These *seven* dreadful experiences threaten to divorce us from God’s love, tearing us out of His arms like a young bride torn from her husband. Yet Paul answers his own question: **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship...?”** In the Greek original life’s *trouble* presses us down from above and *hardship* squeezes from all sides. Sometimes it’s hurtful comments of non-believers or even weak Christians excluding us because of our faith. We ought not be offended or surprised because God tells us to expect this, to pick up our cross and follow Jesus. God’s grace turns this *trouble* and *hardship* into **“light and momentary afflictions.”** (2 Corinthians 4:17) They don’t deserve to be compared with the heavy weight of glory (Romans 8:18) God has promised with Jesus in heaven.

What about **“persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword”**? How can Americans relate when most of us don’t know anyone who has shed his blood for Christ? How can we be concerned in such a blessed land where our biggest problems involve bulging waistlines and overflowing closets? **Danger** for us usually means accidents traveling or hunting, maybe hang gliding. But then the scourge of Islam breaks into the news again. Worshipers of the Arabian moon god are killing and crucifying their

own for not being radical enough. They are also systematically beheading Christian men, women and children to spread their own Islamic State. The “*sword*” seems not so far away in the news.

Sometimes judgmental hearts think Christians bring suffering on themselves. But Paul’s quote in its Old Testament context says otherwise: “*If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart? Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.*” (Psalm 44:20–22 NIV84) Jesus warned His disciples that confessing Him as Lord and Savior means the world will hate us too. How can Christians survive, or like our Christian Palestinian driver and guide, teach our children Christ’s command? “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*” (Matthew 5:44 NIV84) How was Paul convinced to suffer beatings and imprisonment for Christ? He answers...

✠ “**through him who loved us**” (vv.37-39)

“*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*” This list of the worst possible things you can imagine cannot leave any out. So the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to add “*all these things*” – whatever might wake you up at night, or horrify you in the news. Each Christian needs to carefully consider the danger of being Jesus’ disciple and a soldier of the cross. (See Luke 14:25-35.) If a soldier sees no danger, he lets his guard down. But if he thinks the odds are stacked against him, he may give up. We are in danger from both extremes – conceit and despair. So our loving Lord Christ assures us of victory because He has been crucified and has risen as our Savior. With His Holy Spirit’s encouragement we can make a clear assessment in sanctified faith-logic. God computed our sin against Christ’s sacrifice, and totaled the bottom line: “FORGIVEN.” His victory mix for us is this: hearing God’s Word + Christian suffering + the love of Christ → make us **More Than Conquerors**.

For unbelievers the troubles of this life are a foretaste of hell’s torment; unbelief refuses the rescue Jesus won for all. For Christians it’s like a minefield coming down from the Golan Heights to the Sea of Galilee. Satan’s coalition forces of the sinful world and our evil nature laid the mines. But “*we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.*” (Acts 14:22 NIV84) Notice: We’re just passing *through* to heaven’s victory celebration. We cannot, nor need to find our own way. Jesus Christ marked a narrow path *through*. He sacrificed His body like a loyal marine who dives on a land mine to save his fellow soldiers. Jesus gave Himself into death on the cross, then raised Himself to life again. Now He leads us on the way He has clearly mapped out in His written Word, the Bible. “*Through*” His cross we find both guidance and strength for carrying our own crosses “from victory unto victory....” (CW 474)

And yet Paul says there is more. He closes with a *complete* list of *ten*: “*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.*” *Death* cannot come too hard or *life* last too long. Evil *angels* with legions of *demons* cannot do it. Look around at the *present* or far into the *future*. You won’t find *any powers*, no *height* of conceit or *depth* of despair or *anything else in all creation* that can tear you away *from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. His self-sacrificing love conquers all.

Find your favorite wedding picture. Look at their eyes shining with love for each other. None can shine so brightly as Christ for His bride the Church. Here is the security our faith-marriage needs to grow in Him. This solid confidence will withstand life’s storms without shaking or crumbling. Christ is our blessed assurance that God is committed to love and value us forever and a day. Look into the smiling face of Jesus. Watch God’s love turn troubles into blessings. The cross of Christ is proof that cannot be argued away. His empty tomb shouts our victory. “**I am convinced....**” We are **More Than Conquerors** – “**through Him who loved us.**” Amen.