

**Super Conquerors**  
**Romans 8:31-39**  
**January 10, 2010**  
**FBC Waynesboro**

It was early in my ministry and among my first funerals. I had yet to have any training at all and so we doing ministry by mimicry. I did not have a lot of good role models for ministry in my town but I had one great one and in those early days, I did as he did. It provided for a good start. But something happened one day at a graveside that startled me in a way that stirred me to ask questions of a text. I stood there that day ready to begin the committal service and did what I had seen him do; I pointed to the casket stretched over the empty grave and raised the question of Romans 8:31, “what then shall we say to these things?” And it was right there and right then that I was startled by this stirring: is this what Paul is talking about? Is this an appropriate use of this text in this way beside an open grave and a grieving family? Well, is it?

“These Things” is one word in the original language. It is feminine in gender and plural in number which means that whatever it refers to in the text must be the same gender and the same number. And we find its referent all the way back in verse 18 in the phrase “the sufferings.” So that “these things” refers to “the sufferings” and all that is between that word and this word. In other words, this phrase is connected to what we were examining last week. Paul proclaims a powerful principle in verse 18 that becomes the premise for what he will then present: “for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” And in the Greek text the focus is on the phrase “not worth comparing.” The verse reads literally, “for I consider not worth comparing the suffering of the present time with the about to come glory revealed to us.” And then he tells us why: because of what God is doing in the midst of suffering and because of what we know as believers in the midst of suffering. God sends suffering into the lives of the saints to reveal His glory, to reconcile His creation to Himself and to bring full redemption to His children so that we can know the power of God at work in prayer, the purpose of God at work in our lives and the unfolding plan of God for His people. And then Paul raises the question, “what then shall we say to these things?” He gives us then four truths that every child of God can declare and upon which we can live our lives.

Now as we turn our attention to these four truths I want us to be reminded of what the Spirit of God is doing in this most significant chapter in Romans. It is the culmination of everything that Paul has been teaching us about what we are to believe. And it is in this chapter that He concentrates on the Holy Spirit: one reference in the first seven chapters and twenty here. He wants us to believe in the Holy Spirit who because we are the children of God is sanctifying us by the Word of God among the people of God, is using suffering as a most significant instrument in that process and gives us the assurance that based on the grace of God made known to us in Jesus Christ by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit we are more than conquerors: we are super conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ. If you have been made right with God through Jesus Christ as you have surrendered your life to Jesus as Lord, you can live out your life on the foundation of these four truths.

Truth Number One: God is for us. He is working in our lives to do all that is necessary to make us the most useful instruments in the work of His Kingdom that we can be. God being for us does not mean that He is after what we are after. It means that He works by His Spirit in our hearts and lives to enable us to be after what He is after. And we see that both in the phrase that He uses that is translated “for us” and in what follows from the phrase that explains its meaning. The phrase is the same one that is used when the Bible speaks of Jesus dying for us. That does not mean that Jesus dies so that we can have our way; it means that Jesus dies so that sinners set in our way can be transformed to focus on His way which is the only way that brings us ultimately what we need.

Paul explains how God executes this truth in our lives. There are three things here that are all tied together. First, God did not spare His own Son. The word for “spare” is found nine times in the New Testament without as single reference that is positive. Paul warns the Ephesian elders that wolves will come and not spare the flock (Acts 20:29). Paul teaches in Romans 11 that God did not spare the natural branches of the house of Israel from destruction (11:21) and he warns the church in Corinth that he will not spare them when he makes a second visit (13:2). It is always used with a tone of wrathful judgment, and that is its meaning here. God is for us as seen in what He did to His Son. He did not spare Him. He poured out upon Him on the cross the wrath that we deserve so that every time we look at Calvary we get a visual of just how sinful we are and just what God did so that this declaration could be made. Secondly, not only did God

not spare His Son but also He sacrificed His one and only Son. The phrase “gave him up” is one word in the Greek that means to hand over to the enemy. The darkness of the devil was doing demonic and disastrous work at the cross but it was all in accordance with the design of God so that this holy and pure God could say this to you based on the shed blood of His Son: I am for you. Only the most misinformed of people could use this phrase of their own interest. Thirdly, He shares with us graciously all the grace that is needed to be faithful to Him and to find fullness in Him. That is the whole point. So, what shall we say in the midst of our sufferings knowing what we know about what God is doing: we can say that our God is for us. And He is working for His glory and the advancement of His Kingdom and He has considered us worthy to suffer for His Name.

Secondly, we can say that we are the elect of God, 33-34. Now what Paul does here is very interesting because he does not point at all to us and what we know; he points to God and what God has done through Jesus Christ to enable us to say that we are the elect of God. Peter reminds us that it is essential that we make sure our calling and our election, 2 Peter 1:3-11. And what Peter proclaims is so necessary for us to hear and it was for him an experiential reality. He knew what it was to talk the talk and not walk the walk. But let me tell you what else is so essential: we must not reverse our sanctification and our justification so that we find ourselves loaded down by unnecessary guilt because we begin to base our being right with God on what we do and what we do not do. We are justified by grace through faith as the gift of God: Grace is a gift of God. Faith is a gift of God. And where this grace is real, it always manifests itself in the desires that are common to all Christians: worship, study, growth, witness, work in and through the body of Christ. All of these are the sure and certain evidences of grace; none of them earn us grace. And that is why Paul does here what he does; he wants us to remember how we become the elect of God. Now as we look at this little section I want you to ask yourself what part you play here? First, Paul says that we did not elect God, God elected us. We are God’s elect. The word means “to speak out of.” Second, it is God who justifies. It is God who declares a guilty sinner deserving of hell to be free from the penalty and power of sin while sin is still present in the sinner now declared to be right with God by God Himself. Third, God declares us to be right with Himself on the basis of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We cannot declare ourselves to be right with God because there is nothing us that deserves righteousness. Fourth, I am kept right with God by the intercession of Jesus who is at the right hand of God and Paul has already

taught me about the Holy Spirit who is agonizing within me because I do not know how to pray as God has ordained that I should pray. Praise God, I can stand before you today and tell you even as a preacher of this glorious Word of God that what I deserve is His condemnation but because of the grace of God through Jesus Christ I have been chosen and called, and changed and am being conformed to the image of Jesus. I am among the elect of God. Are you? As He has convicted you of your sin and shown you your dark depravity before Him and as He calls you to Himself have you said “yes” to that call? Will you do that today?

Thirdly, We can say with Paul that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, 35-36. The phrase “love of Christ” is so rich. It means both the love that Christ has for us and the love that we have for Him. We love Him because He first loved us. And this kind of love is complete commitment and sold out surrender; it is the kind of love that enables us to love Jesus and His Body more than we love anyone or anything else. Then Paul begins his litany. Count the words. There are seven things that he lists here and they go from bad to worse , they take us from pressure through pain to death. Tribulation is being squeezed by the world and the flesh into conformity. Distress is difficulty that begins to dominate life (2 Corinthians 12:10). Persecution is either active and aggressive or passive and very painful. Famine is the word for hunger and it points to believers who struggle even to have the necessities of life which leads to lack of adequate clothing because of being under the kind of attack that will lead them to death. And to substantiate this most significant reality of life in this world for the people of God, Paul takes us back to a Psalm in which the Psalmist recites the mighty deeds of God as the context for the current condition of the people of God, 44:22; and then he issues this plea, 23-26. I hope we get this one because when Paul says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ he is assuming that some things are going to come your way simply because you are a child of God and those things are not going to be good but you can say this and stand on it: nothing can separate me from the love of Christ: not my rebellious child, not my ruined relationship, not my loss of job, not my failure in faithfulness, not my cancer, not my loss of a dear one to death-----nothing can separate me from the love of Christ.

Fourthly, we can say that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Now the word that is translated “more than conquerors” has a root that is very familiar to us. The root is “nike.” The prefix is a prefix that means “above

and beyond.” We are superconquerors. Now here is what you need to know: the pagan world of that period made heroes out of men and women who struggled and survived by their own strength. They showed that nothing could keep them down. They just did it. They were “nikes” but Paul does not say that. In fact, the pagan world would have laughed at his line in verse 37. Paul says that we don’t have any ability in ourselves to conquer anything and when we call attention to that, we are just like the pagan world. It is far worse when we want to make God an addendum to that. Boy, he is a fighter and he is hanging in there but we need God’s help now. No, we as believers know that we are weak and frail and have no real ability to fight anything so that we say that we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. Then Paul shows us the expanse and the extent of this truth.

Death nor life refers to the life that God brings and the life that Satan seeks to produce; God brings us real life and Satan seeks to seduce us into something else and something less, but he will not succeed. Angels refers to heaven while the rules refer to the demonic authorities that rule this present world. Things present refer to life in this world here and now while things to come refer to those things known to God and held in His hand. Powers refers to all the forces that seek to dominate our lives that emerge out of this world and appeal to our flesh. Height and depth cover the expanse and then as to cover all the bases Paul adds “nor anything else in all creation” and he uses a word that means anything not covered by any of the terms above has any POWER or ABILITY or AUTHORITY to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So there it is. God is at work in the lives of His children to sanctify us through His Word and by His people and He uses suffering as a vital component in His Work during which we can be sustained joyfully in these four truths: He is for us, We are His, Nothing can separate us from His Love and we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Is that where you are standing today? Why would you want to stand anywhere else?