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More Than Conquerors

Studies in Romans 8

Study 8 – Who Can Separate Us from the Love of Christ?

(Romans 8:35-39)

“...Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” Acts 14:22

The Bible tells us every follower of Christ will experience tribulation in this life. “Tribulation” is a very descriptive term. The biblical term means a pressing, pressing together, or pressure. Our English word comes from the Latin “Tribulum”, a Roman implement for threshing wheat. It consisted of a large, heavy wooden platform studded with sharp stones on bottom. It would be dragged over harvested wheat to separate the grain from the chaff. This gives us the picture of being under pressure and beaten down. This may be an apt description of recent days in the capitol!

Even under such great pressure, the believer has the assurance of victory through Christ! This is Paul’s message as he closes Romans chapter 8. Let us seek to find the assurance, peace, and joy of knowing that we are “more than conquerors” in the face of the greatest trials and tribulations.

In Romans Paul has taught us though we are all sinners and under God’s judgement, God sent His Son to suffer, die, and rise again that we might be justified – be made right – with Him. In Romans 8 Paul has taught us the great assurance the believer has in their relationship with God. Those who put their faith in Christ alone for salvation are given the Holy Spirit who gives new life, works in their lives to make them more like Christ, and gives them the assurance of their right relationship with their Heavenly Father.

Paul drives home the message of this chapter by asking a series of questions that help us understand the great truths he has shared. We previously looked at three of these questions: **“If God is for us, who is against us?”**; **“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?”**; and **“Who is the one who condemns?”**

Now we come to Paul’s grand climax as he asks the greatest question of all, **“Who will separate us from the love of Christ?”** As we contemplate his answer to this question we find the greatest assurance that the believer will have victory over the greatest challenges whether in the statehouse or in our lives.

³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.”

³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to

come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

The Great Challenges

Paul reminds us of the Great challenges all believers will face in their lives. As he asks, **“who will separate us from the love of Christ?”** He describes those challenges in vivid terms; tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword. We saw how “tribulation” speaks of the great pressure and beating down we may be under. These trials are so great for some believers they even lead to death. Paul may be recalling his own sufferings (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) as well as the sufferings of other believers in the past (Hebrews 11:36-39). Yet however difficult, Paul says in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer.

Paul goes on to enumerate another list of things which cannot separate us from the love of Christ. He does so in a way which makes clear there is absolutely nothing which can separate the true believer from God’s love. **Not life nor death** – this sums up the whole of our human experience. **Not angels nor principalities** – supernatural beings (the angels and fallen angels). **Things present nor things to come** – anything we might experience in our present or our future. **Nor powers** – the government authorities who may persecute us for our faith. **Not height or depth** – the greatest highs or worst lows in life. **Nor any other created thing** – nothing in this life.

This is certainly a daunting list describing all that might challenge and oppose us in this life. But in the face of it all, Paul gives us the greatest of assurance.

The Great Assurance

Paul gives us two of the greatest assurances we could ever hear.

“In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” (vs. 37)

Many think Paul invented the bible term “overwhelmingly conquer”. It is a compound word. “Overwhelmingly” is the preposition “hyper”. “Conquer” comes from a word with which we are all quite familiar – “Nike”, which is the Greek word for “victory”. We are “hyper winners” or “hyper conquerors”. Paul encourages us that no matter how great the tribulations and trials we face, we do not merely survive them – we overwhelmingly conquer them! If we put it in military terms, it is an utter defeat. If we put in athletic terms it is a blowout.

We should define what exactly this victory is. Paul is not saying that we will be delivered out of all these earthly struggles. Paul’s message in Romans 8 is the assurance that the true believer will ultimately be saved and experience the glory of being with our Savior for eternity. Nothing can take away that salvation. Nothing can prevent the believer from ultimately being with Christ. The presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life assures us of this fact. God will certainly be with us and help us through the trials. God will use the trials for our good and for His glory. Our great victory comes when we join Christ in heaven for eternity!

How do we gain this victory? It is **“through Him that loved us”**. As is almost always the case in the capitol, with the passage of pay raises for state employees has come quite a bit of discussion regarding who gets the credit for the “victory”. Paul tells us that all who have truly put their faith in Christ have victory over all the trials and challenges of this life and in reaching glory to come. He makes it clear that the One, and only One gets credit for our victory is Jesus Christ!

VE day (March 8, 1945) and VJ day (August 14, 1945) were great days of celebration in American history. On those days, many Americans rightfully exclaimed, “We won the war!” Most of those Americans never went into battle. Most did not suffer and fight. Most did not give up their lives for their country. Yet every American won the war through the fighting, suffering and dying of those who did.

Every believer has overwhelming victory because Jesus Christ came and fought the spiritual battle for us. When we put our faith in Christ we overwhelmingly conquer because of all He did for us!

“Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vs. 39)

Paul assures us that nothing can separate us from God’s love. We should note Paul is referring to God’s love for us and not our love for God as the assurance of our salvation and victory. Our love may waver and fail in the face of our trials and tribulations. God’s love for us will never fail! In verse 37 God’s love is referred to in the past tense. ***God demonstrated His love by not sparing His Son but delivering Him over for us all (8:32)***. We see this earlier in Romans:

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (5:6-8)

If God loved us like this when we were His enemies, how much more will He now save us and give us victory? Christ died for us, and now He intercedes for us in heaven. Who or what could ever separate us from such love?

We should be reminded that we cannot experience separation from the love of God only because Jesus experienced this separation on our behalf. When He took the guilt of our sin upon Himself, He experienced this separation from His Father. As we trust in Him we will never experience separation because HIS separation secured our salvation!

Are You Convinced?

Paul wrote, ***“I am convinced nothing...will be able to separate us from the love of God...”*** He was convinced because he trusted in God’s promises and he had seen how God was using the trials and tribulations in his own life. He wrote these things that we might be convinced as well.

The Roman believers were soon to experience unimaginable tribulation and persecution. Paul’s message of assurance would prepare them to face these great trials.

Paul’s message will prepare us as well to face the trials and persecutions both in the statehouse and in our lives. Let us too be convinced of the assurance we find in God’s great love for us!

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursday, March 8

8:00 AM Gov. Org. Conference Room (East Wing)

12:00 Noon Senate President’s Conference Room