

I've given today's message the title: "**Super-Conquerors through Christ**". Because in the Greek, that's virtually what it says - ὑπερνικῶμεν (hyper-nikomen). Hyper (super) nikomen (conquerors). One word - ὑπερνικῶμεν – "**Super-Conquerors through Christ**".

In 2 Corinthians, Jesus said to Paul, ^{12:9} "**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.**"

And some of us, may never have really grasped the significance of this concept: - that in **our** weakness, God's power is demonstrated in all of its completeness. If you long to experience God's power, then don't limit yourself to what you can handle without Him...

Something I learned from the Bible study, "Experiencing God – Knowing and Doing the Will of God", is that when I feel that God may be given me an assignment, if I reckon I can achieve it, well it's probably not God speaking. Because God is in the habit of giving out 'God-sized' assignments. When God speaks, He will usually be giving us an assignment that we know we **can't** do. And so we have to step out in faith, and we begin to experience God as **He** does His work through us...

It is in our **weakness**, that we begin to experience God's power. – not in our strength.

But a lot of us, just don't get that... We think "Yeah, I'm willing to serve God, and this is what I can do."...

Sometimes we talk about “getting out of our comfort zone....” But I want to recon that phrase... I reckon as Christians, we need to get **into** our comfort zone, because what greater comfort is there, then stepping out (in faith), knowing that God is right there with us, and His power, is going to be made complete, in our weakness. When you’re a Christian, **there’s** the comfort zone, right there – when we go beyond what we can do – when we’ve gone beyond what **we** can bear. And God’s power kicks in... There’s the comfort – The Lord, in all of His power and might.

So, being a super-conqueror through Christ:

It’s probably only about a decade ago, that I truly began to grasp what this means. You see, even though I’d been a Christian for my whole life, I was still very much a product of the world in which I lived. And to me:

- The conqueror was the strong one
- The one who wins the fight
- The one who always comes out on top.
- The victor over the vanquished
- And of course, the conqueror enjoys the victor’s spoils
- And so my picture of a “conqueror”, was a person of strength and resources – someone who gets what he wants, isn’t burdened by suffering, and never goes without...

But it was about a decade ago, as I read the book of Revelation, and I was in a section where Jesus dictates a letter to Seven Churches. And to each of those 7 churches, Jesus exhorted them to be “conquerors” or “overcomers” (it’s the same word in the Greek), and He promised them that anyone

who was a conqueror, would receive heavenly rewards. But what did being a conqueror entail?

Let me just read to you, a little bit of the letter to the church at Smyrna: Revelation 2: **10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison** (that doesn't sound like something that would happen to a conqueror – suffering and getting thrown into prison), **that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation** (conquerors suffering and going through times of trouble?). **Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life** (dying – conquerors don't die). **11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'**

And I realised, as I continued to read those 7 letters, that for a Christian to be a conqueror, means to be someone who endures in their faith:

- It means to keep going
- It means to continue in the faith
- It means to never pull back
- It means to follow Jesus, on whatever path He's taking us – even unto death..

That's what it means for a **Christian** to be a conqueror.

And unless we understand this, we're never going to understand the New Testament church. And we certainly won't understand today's reading and what it means to be a super-conqueror.

In Romans Chapter 8, we've been learning what it means to live according to the Spirit, as opposed to living according to the flesh. And the temptation to live according to the flesh, is always there, even for Christians.

The flesh craves what seems good to the flesh – health, wealth, easy-going, the path of least resistance, a long life. Where as the Spirit craves to follow Christ, and to be obedient to our Heavenly Father, no matter what the cost.

To be a super-conqueror in Christ, doesn't mean that we'll never suffer in the flesh, but **through** that suffering, we endure. We never give up. We never lose heart. We always trust in Christ. We continue to witness to the glory of God... That's what it means to be a super-conqueror...

To be a super-conqueror in Christ, doesn't mean that we're self-confident. We probably all know a Christian or two, who are what we might describe as, "*super-Christians*" – people who always know the right thing to do, the right thing to say; They ooze self-confidence; And they're supremely confident in their abilities, and they always seem to come out on top...

And sometimes we tend to compare ourselves to them, and we feel like we're losers...

But we're not, because when we're about to lose, that's where the power of God kicks in. You may not be the image of what you picture to be a "super Christian",,, But when you trust in Christ and endure, you become more than a conqueror – you become a "**Super-Conqueror**" in Christ.... Let me explain:

It begins with faith. Today's reading began with the word "likewise". That ties it to what we leaned last week. What did we learn last week? We learned about faith and patience, as we wait for glory. We wait for what we do not see... Glory is coming. We are heirs of that glory, and we wait with faith and patience.

And now Paul says, "Likewise" – just like how in faith, we patiently wait for what we do not see – We wait for the Lord to bring glory – just like that, even now, the Spirit helps us in our weakness...

Sometimes we are so **incapable** of helping ourselves, we don't even know what to pray for.

We don't always know what God's will is in a given situation. I get tired of those who claim that they always know what to pray for, because we don't. It is the height of human arrogance, for us to presume that we always know the will of God. In Isaiah, the Lord said "My ways are higher than your ways. My thoughts are higher than your thoughts"ⁱ. And in today's reading, we are told that we don't know what to pray.

And so when we **do** pray, we should **always** pray in the attitude of "If this is Your will"ⁱⁱⁱ

But sometimes we don't know what to pray for, (as we ought)... Oh, we can make a big list of things that **we** want, and often that list will be overwhelmed by the things that the flesh is craving for (health; wealth; and an easy-going long life). But what if that's not what God wants... *If I got what I wanted, I wouldn't be your preacher today... I prayed (so*

*many times), Lord, please get me back onto “the land”...
Help me to buy a farm, so that I can be what I always wanted
to be...*

But the Lord never answered that prayer, because I wasn't praying as I ought... It wasn't God's will for me to be a farmer...

we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

There's times when we don't know what to pray. And in those times, there's essentially 2 ways to proceed: Sometimes, we don't want to admit that we don't know what to pray for, and so we end up stringing together a whole lot of religious sounding clichés and platitudes... and we fill the silence with stuff that's not really on our hearts, but we want to sound like we know what we're doing... And in doing that, we become just like the Pharisees that Jesus criticised...

The other way to pray, is to say, “Lord, right now, I don't know what to pray”... And pour out your heart, “Lord, this is what's going on. This is what I feel... But Lord, I don't know what to pray, because I don't know what Your will is.”... And just spend some time, in the arms of our Heavenly Father... And your words will stop, but the prayer keeps going. The Holy Spirit takes over, and He does the praying for us...

- And sometimes, the Lord will show you, “This is what you need to pray for”.

- If you have the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues – of speaking in other languages, you may find yourself praying in tongues.
- If you're like me and don't have that gift, the Spirit still prays on our behalf, in groanings that we'll never hear.
- And often, we won't know what the Holy Spirit has prayed on our behalf, but we know that God's will be done, and no matter what the outcome, we are safe in His hands.

V28 says: ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

- That doesn't mean, that we're always going to get what we want.
- It doesn't mean, that we'll always be cured of a disease
- It doesn't mean that our troubles will always disappear
- It doesn't mean that we'll even survive in this physical life

But in faith, we know that what God is doing (in us; and to us; and through us), will work for good – His Good.

Because each one of us, is called for a purpose. And our purpose, is tied up with the Good that God is doing. “Good”, according to the Spirit – may not be what seems “good” to the flesh... And that's why it's important for us to walk according to the Spirit – don't walk according to the flesh.

So, how do we know this? What's the basis that Paul can say that we know that all things work for good? Let's look at V29:

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

“Predestination”, is one of the great doctrines of the Gospel, but some people hate it... You see, we humans, we like to think that **we’re** in control of our **own** destiny. But “predestination” means that God chose who would become His children, long before we were even born. And some people **hate** that idea, because they feel that God’s deciding the fate of those who haven’t even had a chance yet.

*In the Sci-Fi movie, “The Minority Report”, there’s been a revolution in law enforcement. And they can look into the future and observe people’s actions that haven’t happened yet. And so they can see in the future, what looks like somebody being killed by another person, and so the law enforcement are sent to execute the perpetrator, **before** they do the killing... But it fell down, because it could only see a person’s actions. And they couldn’t tell if it was a true crime or not, because they couldn’t see the motivation. They couldn’t see the heart...*

But I want you to understand this: God **does** know the heart. V29 tells us that He “foreknew” us...

Today's the first time I've ever preached on this passage – it's the first time that I've ever studied it at any great depth... And I used to think that when it said that God "foreknew", that just meant that God knew what He was going to do ahead of time... But that's not what it means.

What it means, is that even before the world was created, God **knew you**. He knew you. He knew you then, even better than you know yourself now. ... How well, do we ever really know someone?

Before a couple get married, they've been courting for a while, and then they get engaged, and by the time it comes to the wedding, they think they know each other pretty well. But then once you're married, in so many areas, you realise how little you really knew about that person. When we first got married, we lived in a caravan 10 months... And let me tell you, when you live in very close proximity to your new husband or wife, you learn a lot in a very short time...

But God did know us – He truly knew us, before the creation of the world.

- He knew our heart
- He knew how we would be inclined toward love or to hate
- He knew how long we would hold out, before our hearts would yield to Him
- He knew, who would be children of hope, and who would be children of wrath.
- He knew, who's heart would incline toward faith, and who's heart was set hard against Him
- He knew, who's heart would cry out for a saviour,
- and He knew who was so self-confident that they felt they didn't need a saviour.

God doesn't only truly **know** us – He **knew** us, right from before creation.

And with this knowledge, God predestined us... It's sort of like He said:

- “I know you. I choose you.
- I'm going to call you.
- I'm going to adopt you as My child.
- I'm going to put my Holy Spirit in your heart.
- I'm going to make you just like my son...
- I can see, that without me, you will be filled with sin. But I can deal with that.
- Jesus will die for you.
- And through faith, you will be justified.
- And it's not going to stop there – I'm going to continue to make you like my Son.
- I'm going to glorify you.
- Yes, you will go through suffering for a while... But that suffering will pale into insignificance, compared with the riches of the glory I'm giving you...

That's predestination. Isn't that wonderful?

- He foreknew us.
- He predestined us, to be changed to become like His son.
- He called us
- He justified us
- And He will glorify us.
- We are so confident, that He will bring us through to Glory, that it talks as if it's actually happened: He has glorified us.

That's the plan, and it began way before He created the world. Sometimes, when troubles and hardships come upon us, God's plan is to deliver us from these, and God is glorified in that deliverance. But sometimes, His plan is for us to suffer. And God is glorified, as we persevere through that suffering.

So: **If God is for us, who can be against us?**

If our Heavenly Father, has set in motion, the process of us being saved.... When He's already **paid** for that process, with the blood of His own Son, why on Earth, would He **ever** desert us now? He's not going to abandon us. He's going to carry it through to completion. And here we find one of the most wonderful assurances:

³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are super-conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will

be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are super-conquerors, when we endure in Christ, because the power of God pulls us through. His good and perfect plan, will not be abandoned. He chose us, and by His power, nothing can separate us from His love, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I think we might leave it at that for now, and next week we'll digest it a bit more.

Let's pray:
Heavenly Father,
What an amazing revelation.
You knew us, even before the creation of the world.
And because You knew us, You chose us.
And You decided to make us like Your son.
Thank you Lord.
What a privilege. What an honour.

Lord, we are weak.
Lord, in our weakness, demonstrate Your power.
When we don't know what to pray,
Holy Spirit, pray on our behalf.
Lead us into Your will –
Your good and perfect will.

Father, help us to always trust you.
Because we know,

that for those who love God all things work together
for good, for those who are called according to his
purpose

Lord, lead us into Your purposes.
Father, we yield ourselves to you,
Because in Your hands, is the safest place for us to be.

We're on the path to glory.
Praise You, Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

ⁱ Isaiah 55:9 (ESV)

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

ⁱⁱ James 4; Matthew 6:10