

Last week we began learning what it means to be a “super-conqueror” through Christ. It’s in our weakness, that we begin to experience the power of God.

Humanly speaking:

- a conqueror is always the strong one
- The victor over the vanquished
- a person of strength and resources
- someone who gets what he wants, isn’t burdened by suffering, and never goes without...

But to be a conqueror “in Christ”, is very different to that. The one who conquers, is the one who endures in their faith – the one who, **despite** what’s happening:

- whether it be persecution
- or poverty
- whether it be sickness or disease
- or abuse , or ridicule

The conqueror, is the one who’s faith in Jesus, continues to endure, **through** all these things.

We also learned, that in our weakness, there **are** times when we don’t even know what to pray for. And in these times, the Holy Spirit, prays on our behalf. And we know, that Holy Spirit, will always pray according to the will of God... When we pray, our flesh sometimes gets in the way of that. The cravings of the flesh – (health, wealth, a long, easy-going life), sometimes gets in the way of what God’s will is.

And so sometimes, we might find that our prayers aren’t getting answered, because we’re praying for what the **flesh** is craving for, rather than praying according to the Spirit. And in these times, we need to just be honest with God, and say,

“Lord, I don’t know what Your will is. I don’t know what to pray.”... “This is what’s going on. This is how I feel.”

“Lord, what is Your will? What do **you** want me to be praying for?” And let the Lord take it from there...

And sometimes, the Lord will show us what to pray for. But at other times, we may never know what the Holy Spirit has prayed on our behalf, but we can always trust in the Lord because V28 says: <sup>28</sup> **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**

- God foreknew us. He knew you (even before the world was created)
- He predestined us, to be changed to become like His son.
- He called us
- He justified us
- And He glorified us.

And nothing is ever going to get in the way of our Lord completing this work. And so, we can always trust, that in all things – even the tough times – these work together for the good that God is doing. We just have to have faith.

So, that’s a brief summary of what we learned last week.

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This week, we’re going to be concentrating from V31-39.

Romans 8:31-39, contain some of the greatest hope and comfort and assurance, that we’ll ever find, anywhere in the Bible. And today, we’re going to begin, by clarifying “Who this hope is for.” – “Who is this hope promised to? And who

is it **not** promised to?" ... And then we're going to talk about how this hope applies for us.

But before we begin, let's pray.

*Lord, we thank you that in our weakness,*

*You become our strength.*

*And Lord, we thank you for the words of hope we're about to hear.*

*As you speak to us today,*

*fill us with this hope.*

*Fill us, with confidence in Christ.*

*Show us, how You will carry us,*

*through every trouble and hardship that we encounter,*

*That we may be "super-conquerors"*

*through Jesus Christ,*

*our Lord and Saviour,*

*Amen.*

So, let's begin:

**V<sup>38</sup>** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> 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.

And that's a wonderful promise. What a wonderful assurance – that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But “who” is this promise made to? Who is the “us”? If nothing can separate “us” from the love of God, who is the “us”?

Well, obviously it’s referring to Christians – to disciples of Jesus Christ... But some people, take this passage, as a “proof text” for a doctrine (which I don’t believe is true) – the doctrine of “once saved, always saved”. The Calvinists would call it “The perseverance of the saints”. The Brethrens would call it “Eternal security”... But essentially it means the same thing.

They would argue, that if at some point in your life, you made a commitment to Jesus, and if at that time, you meant it in your heart, you are saved, and nothing can ever take that salvation away again. Even if later on, you **hate** God and hate everything **about** God – even if you decide “I’m not going to follow Jesus any more.”, and essentially lose faith, they say “That means nothing, because God has called you; He has predestined you, and nothing can ever take you out of His hands...”

So, you see the logic? If someone gives their life to Jesus, they’re saved – *they’ve begun the race*. And **they believe that once someone has *begun* the race, they’re guaranteed to *complete* the race...** And it doesn’t matter what they do after that, they’re still saved, because nothing can separate them from the love of God...

That’s the premise of “Once saved always saved”. ... And I suspect there are countless people who will find themselves in hell, because they’ve been taught that it doesn’t matter what they do; it doesn’t matter how they behave; It doesn’t matter

what they **now** believe; It doesn't matter what their relationship with God is now like.... – if they at some time prayed “the sinners prayer”, they've been assured “you're saved”, and nothing can detract from that salvation...

But let me say, in pretty much every text that gets used to “prove” the “once saved always saved” doctrine, if you actually read that verse in its context, it doesn't **really** say what they believe it says at all. And today's reading is a ‘point-in-case’:

Who are the “us” in **these** verses? If nothing in all of creation, is able to separate **us** from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord., who are the “us”?

Well the answer's right there in the verse itself: It's those who hold Jesus as **their Lord**.

Whenever anybody ever quotes a verse to you, **always** go to your Bible, and read it in its context. *What's the saying?* “*A text, out of context, is a pretext*”... Because a verse taken out of the Bible, and held out on its own, will very often **appear** to say something completely different to what it's really talking about.

And in its context, Romans 8, is definitely **not** talking about those who began following Jesus, but then decided other things were more important to them... In fact, it's quite the opposite. Romans 8, is talking about those who would rather **die**, then deny Jesus. It's talking about those who are

**persecuted** for their faith, but in that persecution, they **keep on believing**.

V28 says <sup>28</sup> **And we know that for those who love God (Are you hearing this? For those who love God) all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**

It's not for those who **don't** love God any more. It's not for those who **used** to love God. It's not for those who made a commitment at some time in their life, but then gave up on that and started following the flesh, instead of following the Spirit. In V36, it says:

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

Who's the we? Well, it's definitely not someone who's lost their faith. It's for those who are so strong in their faith, they would even die for the sake of Jesus.

If we had more time, I could take you right throughout the New Testament, and I could show you verses like: Colossians 1, where it tells us what God has done to save us, and how we will be presented holy and blameless <sup>23</sup> **if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting** from the hope of the gospel that you heard....

You see, the overall picture painted in the New Testament, is an exhortation – an urging – a cheering on, to continue – to persevere. Because when we persevere (with God's help), (It's not something many of us could ever do on our own) –

But with God's help, when we persevere, and when we endure in the faith, nothing can ever; ever; ever, take away the promise of glory and final salvation. And nothing can ever separate us from God, even in these times of trouble...

That's what it's about... It's **not** about promising good things to those who have turned their backs on Jesus – it's about building our confidence in Christ, to help us to endure for His name.

So, do you love Jesus? Are you a disciple of Jesus? If so, this passage is for you – you're one of the "us", who will not be separated from the love of God. It's for those who's faith endures.

So, that's got the warning out of the way. Now let's discover the blessing:.....

Whenever Jesus makes a promise, we can always count on that promise. And a lot of Christians are very much into "claiming" the promises of God... But here's a few promises, that have been made to the disciples of Jesus, and strangely enough, I don't too often hear many people claiming **these** promises for themselves:

Matthew 10:22 Jesus said: <sup>22</sup> **and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**

Luke 6:22 Jesus said: <sup>22</sup> "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!

Mark 10:29 <sup>29</sup> Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, (and I've heard lots of people claim that one... but they never claim the whole promise, because the next words are:) with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Luke 21:12, Jesus said: <sup>12</sup> But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. <sup>13</sup> This will be your opportunity to bear witness.

John 15:20 Jesus said: <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

.....

2 Timothy 3:12 Paul said: <sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

If you're someone who "claims the promises of God", do you claim those promises???

One of the marks of being a Christian, is being persecuted for our faith. But (here's some good news) just about every promise of persecution, is accompanied with a promise of reward; or strength; or hope...

Just look at the first quote that I gave: Matthew 10:22 Jesus said: <sup>22</sup> **and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**

And this is the picture of hope that the New Testament paints for us as Christians – **all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...** But we endure persecution (with joy), because God is with us; He will **not** desert us; and He will carry us through to our glorious inheritance...

Just because things are going bad in life, that **doesn't** mean that you're outside of God's will..... This is Jesus, keeping His promises. Jesus promised us that this life would be tough, and at times almost unbearable... But that's OK, – He also promised "glory"...

But today I want to ask a question: "Is God's promise to be with us, and to strengthen us, limited to those times when we

are persecuted because of our faith in Jesus????” I don’t believe it is.

Every person in the world, encounters times of trouble. It’s part of the fallen world in which we live.

- Acute illness
- Chronic disease / chronic pain that just goes on and on...
- Enduring Chemotherapy or radium.
- Living with cancer - dying with cancer
- The emotional pain of a child who ‘hates your guts’, and they won’t even talk to you
- Times when for some reason, someone hates you
- When you’re bullied
- When no one wants to be your friend, and you feel as if you don’t have any friends at all
- When the bills come in, and there’s nothing left to pay them
- When you feel tired and weary, and there just seems to be no rest
- When you’re worried, and you just can’t seem to sleep at night
- Through depression and anxiety
- For some, it’s in the time when they feel it would less painful to end their own life

What about in these times? It’s not persecution, But can’t we feel, the love of God, right there with us? Disciples of Jesus Christ, have an extra something that gets us through these troubles...

One of the most meaningful testimonies that any of us can have, is to share with others, how, at the times when we’re really going through the wringer, we have experienced the

Lord carrying us; and comforting us; and giving us strength and hope.

The Lord is with us through **every** trouble. Through **every** hardship. And **nothing** can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Nothing!

You might be falsely **accused**. And the whole world might turn against you? Where's your hope then? Our hope, is in God who justifies. Because even if every single person in the whole wide world condemns you, Jesus died for you.

But you might say to me, "But Michael, the trouble is, it's not a false accusation. I actually did those things I'm accused of. And I'm so ashamed. I'm supposed to be a Christian, and I did these horrible things... I have brought God's name into disrepute. I feel so terrible..."

And my question to you would be: "Have you confessed this sin to God, and have you asked for forgiveness?" "You have???" Well, the Lord has forgiven you already." Stop **condemning** yourself. Remember the verse we learned a few weeks ago? <sup>Romans 8:1</sup> **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

Do you know who's condemning you? It's not Jesus – It's Satan. The devil knows that one of his most effective tools for destroying Christians, is to get them to doubt their forgiveness... In the book of Revelation, we're told that Satan accuses the saints of God before the throne of God 24/7<sup>1</sup> He's

there day and night, just accusing us; and accusing us; and accusing us...

But that shouldn't be a worry to us. Satan might be accusing us before God. But Jesus, who is at the right hand of God, is sticking up for us. The devil might be accusing us, but Jesus is defending us. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We need to continually remind ourselves, that when we repent of what we've done, and seek the mercy of God, we are forgiven - completely.

V35 asks: <sup>35</sup> Who shall **separate** us from the love of Christ?

And you might be surprised by this, but that's exactly what a lot of people would love to see happen. – to see Christians separated from Christ – it's a spiritual attack.

*I remember when I was a student at Ag College, one of the lads in my dorm, made it his mission to try and teach me to swear. Others tried to get me to drink – they wanted to get me drunk. Others would try to get me to look at their dirty magazines...*

*Why were they doing that? Because the righteousness of Christians, exposes their unrighteousness. A so they do their best to try and tear us away from Christ.*

*On Vision FM this week, I heard them talking about the persecuted church in North Korea. North Korea, is the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. Why?*

*Because their leader is worshipped like a god – it's part of their control. And Christians know there is only one God they should worship. And so Christians are imprisoned; they are re-educated; they are executed, to try and separate them from Christ... But of course, that's an impossibility. **Nothing** can separate us from the love of Christ.*

*In a number of Muslim countries, Christians are targeted, and the authorities sometimes confiscate everything they have – forcing them into poverty. In other places, it's like they've got a target painted on their back – they're fair game. And the authorities won't protect them.*

To an extent, we're beginning to see this happening in the West. *A Christian baker refuses to decorate a cake for a same-sex wedding, and they're charged under anti-discrimination laws... And we're going to see more and more, of Christians getting targeted – they're attempting to beat Christ out of us.*

Can they separate us from Christ? No way.

Not even **death** can separate us from our Lord... It just moves us straight to glory.

So, what prevents us from ending it all right now? What advantage is there in living? I'll tell you what the advantage is – **Life** is a gift from God. Life doesn't separate us from the love of God. And sometimes, it's in what we consider, to be the very **worst** experiences of life, when we feel **most** loved by God...

For disciples of Jesus, life is our opportunity, to not only experience and feel and know the love of God – Life is our opportunity, to be witness of God’s love, to others...

Sometimes people ask me, “Why do Christians suffer?” “Why doesn’t God just heal us?” “Why is God letting me go through this?” And the answer is simple to say, but sometimes not so easy to accept: He wants you to experience His love. He wants you to lean on Him. And He wants you to help others, who don’t know Him, to know that His love is real.

This is where real faith kicks in. In life. And nothing can separate us from the love of God in life.

Satan and his **demons** might try to attack us, and let me assure you, these attacks are very real. But they can’t separate us from the love of God. And if God is willing, He can just crush them with His little finger.

Nothing **today**, and nothing in the **future**, can ever hurt us.

*Anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia. On average, 1 in 4 people – 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men – will experience anxiety.*<sup>ii</sup>

According to the Beyond Blue website,  
*Anxiety is when ... anxious feelings don't subside – when they're ongoing and exist without any particular reason or cause. It's a serious condition that makes it hard to cope with daily life. Everyone feels anxious from time to*

*time, but for someone experiencing anxiety, these feelings can't be easily controlled.<sup>iii</sup>*

*In a 12-month period, over two million Australians experience anxiety.<sup>iv</sup>*

Are Christians exempt from this condition? No they're not. At times, some Christians are crippled by anxiety... And if that's you, then you need to know, there is nothing today, and nothing in the future, that will separate you from the love of Jesus...

Philippians 4: <sup>5</sup> ..... **The Lord is at hand**; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but **in** everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> **And the peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

There's the cure for anxiety – The Lord is at hand. The Lord is with you. In everything, we can feel His love and His peace...

There is no power; There is no **height** or **depth**; or **anything else**, in all of creation, that is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nice words... But is that some kind of a “cliché”? Is it a “trite saying”?

Not at all... And we know it's not. How do we know? We look back, and we remember what The Lord has already done for us. If He sent His son to die for you, He's not going to abandon you. If He's already demonstrated, this much love, His love isn't going to come to an end. It's not like He has a bottle of love, and once He's poured it out, it's all gone...

The love of God, is tied to His presence, and His power.

- His love is immeasurable. And so is His presence and His power.
- His love is inexhaustible. And so is His presence and His power.
- His love is eternal. And so is His presence and His power.
- His love, carries us in life. And so does His presence and His power.
- His love, is with us in death. And so is His presence and power
- God loves you. And He is present for you. And He is powerful for you.

Life, is our opportunity to experience the love, and the presence, and the power of God.

Let's pray,

Lord, we thank You, for Your love, Your presence, and Your power.

Lord, we thank You, that there is nothing in this life, that can separate us from Your love.

Not even death.

Lord, Help us to truly know this.

Help us to feel Your love.

Lord, give us faith, and hope,  
In every troubled time.  
That through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
We would be super-conquerors,  
In Christ  
Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Rev 12:10

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety>

<sup>iv</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2008). *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 2007*. Cat. no. (4326.0). Canberra: ABS. quoted from <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about-us/research-projects/statistics-and-references?sec=sec-anx>