

Romans 8:37 More than conquerors

Romans 8:37 *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!*

1. *In all these things*

What are *all these things*? We have seen that Christian discipleship involves following a crucified Saviour. The call is to *suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him* (Romans 8:17). The assumption is that if we choose to walk in God's way we will experience at least some suffering just as Jesus did. He left us an example that we might follow in His steps (1Peter 2:20-21). *All these things* are our sufferings.

Romans 6:4 reminds us that we have been buried with Him by baptism into His death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so also we may walk in newness of life. This is the pattern of Christian living to which we have been called: death to the old sinful nature (the evil inclination,) and obedience to righteousness. This is often called the way of the cross.

Paul talks about the personal hardships and difficulties (*all these things*) he has faced in his life and ministry (Romans 8:35), including:

Tribulation: literally means 'pressure'. We all experience pressure in our lives, including pressure in the family, in relationships, in the extended family, in the work place, with people who perhaps have strong anti-Christian views. A Christian couple have been trying to adopt their foster children, but were refused because they believe that the best interests of the children are served when they have a mother and a father. They have experienced tribulation, but their case has caught the attention of the media, and just this week, the council involved recognised that their initial assessment was wrong.¹

Distress: means anguish. We all experienced anguish, for example the death of a loved one, financial problems, ill-health, unemployment, sleep problems, etc.

Persecution: this includes marginalisation or hardship because of our Christian faith. This week eight Christians in Uzbekistan have been punished for having Christian literature in their homes (seven fined and one imprisoned for 2 years.) There are many other examples we hear about far too often.

Famine: means lack of food; we can imagine it could mean lack of spiritual food.

Nakedness: means lack of clothing or nudity; we can imagine it including any sense of shame.

Peril: means danger. This week a Muslim convert to Christ had to be escorted from his home under armed guard ... in Bradford.²

Sword: means war, or possibly judicial punishment. We only have to think of Christians in Aleppo who pray, "Please God give us strength to remain strong. We are praying for Him to give us the tolerance to accept our situation and to live our faith whilst suffering in this time." – Professor Dr Jany Haddad, ministry partner in Aleppo, Syria.

It's *all these things* Paul himself has experienced in one way or another. In fact he concluded,

Romans 8:36 *For your sake we are being killed all the daylong; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.*

This is a verse a quote from Psalm 44 that remembers to good days when God did mighty deeds for Israel. But why Lord, has all this come upon us even though we have not forgotten you? Paul picks up the psalmist's conclusion: it's *for your sake*, to content for the truth of the gospel and the honour of the Name.

¹ <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/adoption/council-to-reconsider-christian-couples-adoption-offer>

² <https://barnabafund.org/news/Christian-convert-forced-to-move-home-under-armed-police-protection>

2. We are more than conquerors

But ... in all these things we are more than conquerors! A conqueror is someone who gains a decisive victory in battle. A few weeks ago I went to visit my son Jon in Belgium and we visited the site of the battle of Waterloo (June 1815), where Wellington, aided by the Prussian General Blücher defeated Napoleon. Even though Wellington was victorious, it wasn't certain which way the battle would go. He called the battle "the nearest-run thing you ever saw in your life." It was only the timely arrival of the Prussians which swung the battle in the allies favour.

Wellington was a conqueror, just, but he wasn't *more than a conqueror*. We are more than conquerors because Jesus has already won a decisive victory through His death and resurrection, against sin and Satan and death. And we share in the victory Jesus has already won (Romans 5:17).

This doesn't mean we don't have battles, we do. But it means we are more than conquerors because the battle belongs to the Lord. In 2Chronicles 20 we read of a battle where God's people were more than conquerors. The Moabites and the Ammonites came against good king Jehoshaphat for battle. Jehoshaphat was afraid, just as we can be afraid when we are faces with troubles. But Jehoshaphat set his face to seek the Lord, and he called all Judah to fast and seek help from the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:3-4). Then Jehoshaphat prayed,

2Chronicles 20:12 For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.

Then Jehoshaphat and the people waited, and God gave a Word through the prophet Jahaziel: "*Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours, but God's ... You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf (2 Chronicles 20:15, 17).*

The next day Jehoshaphat spoke to all the people: *Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets and you will succeed (2Chronicles 20:12b).* And God brought about a great victory. This is what it means to be *more than a conqueror*: *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him give us all things?(Romans 8:31).*

3. Through him who loved us

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us! He loves us, and He loves you, and like a shepherd, He knows His sheep.

Romans 8:29 *For those 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.*

"To know" means that intimate knowing (as Adam knew Eve.) I think Paul has in mind people like Abraham, whom God knew beforehand, and was called God's friend. And he's talking about Abraham's descendants whom God foreknew (Romans 11:2) and whom He loved. And he's also talking about us, because He knows us, and we know Him, and although we have never seen him, we love Him, and are filled with an inexpressible joy. And for those who love God, *all things work together for the good, for those called according to His purpose.* So despite *all these things*, God has a predestined plan for your life, *for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).*

Life can be hard; sometimes it's very hard. But even when we fall or mess up, we are still known, and we are still more than conquerors, not in our own strength, but through Him who loved us with an everlasting love. *Jesus Christ is the one who died for us, more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us (Romans 8:34).* So Paul is convinced that there is absolutely nothing in heaven or on earth able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39).