



More Than Conquerors Romans 8:31-39

Introduction

One careful step at a time, Paul has been presenting the gospel of God: the doctrines of God's grace, love, and mercy lavished upon helpless, hopeless, rebellious sinners. James Montgomery Boice (Romans, Volume 2) likens Paul's presentation to climbing a mountain. Each step of doctrine has taken us higher and higher. Now that we have reached Romans 8:31-39, we are on the top of the mountain; Boice calls this "the mountaintop paragraph" of Romans. It is in these few verses that Paul draws the entire argument of the first eight chapters to "a triumphal conclusion in a series of challenges to every influence that might thwart the church's confident assurance of present preservation and future glory" (New Geneva Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

But before standing tall and secure on the mountain top to sing what Leon Morris calls our "triumph song" (The Epistle to the Romans), let us look back and remember how we got here. Let us review our journey up the mountain through the wonderful doctrines Paul has presented.

Review of Romans 1:1-8:30

Paul began his letter by presenting the *gospel of God* (Romans 1:1) which is the good news of God's own Son come to earth in the flesh, a sacrifice for sin, and resurrected from the dead by the power of God. It is good news which was promised beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scripture. It is the good news of which Paul is not ashamed because it is the *power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith"* (Romans 1:16-17).

Following his glowing introduction of the gospel, Paul carefully laid out the reasons for mankind's need of the gospel. God has revealed Himself, His power, and His divine nature to all through the things He has made. However, men and women refuse to honor God, choosing instead to corrupt the divine revelation and worship things which are made instead of the Maker. This is sin, and sin drags men and women down into a sickening spiral of depravity (Romans 1:18-32).

Even religious people, who condemn sin in others, are sinners. And *there is no partiality with God* (Romans 2:11); all sinners will be judged. Jews will be judged by

the law they have been given and have transgressed. Gentiles will be judged by the law God has written in the hearts of all people (Romans 2:15). Jews and Gentiles alike are under the judgment of God. *There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God* (Romans 3:10-11). The bottom line is that all of mankind is utterly sinful, has no desire to rise above his sin, and even if he did, has no natural ability to do so. No human being can ever meet the righteous requirements of God. Therefore, the only hope for salvation is the gospel of God, justification by faith. *We conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law* (Romans 3:28).

The good news of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone is presented in Romans 3:21-31. It is illustrated in Romans 4 by Abraham, the great patriarch of the Jews and by David, Israel's great king. The benefits of justification are listed in Romans 5: those who are justified by faith have peace with God, access to God, and hope of the glory of God. We were dead in trespasses and sins and fallen sinners as children of Adam, but we have been reconciled to God and given life through Christ, by grace. How great a salvation is this! But that is not all. Those who are justified by faith have entirely new lives.

Paul explains that those who have been justified by faith have died with Christ and risen with Him to a new life. We are dead to sin and alive to God. Having died to sin, we can no longer live in it (Romans 6). However, Christians still struggle with sin and it is a struggle which will continue as long as we inhabit these mortal bodies. The good news is that victory is found through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 7:25). *There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death* (Romans 8:1-2). Christians do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. The Spirit is within us, helping us and assuring us that we are children and heirs of God, confident of ultimate victory. The glory God has promised is so sure that the whole creation is looking forward to it! God is for His people from beginning to end. *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,....Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified* (Romans 8:29-30). God's love toward us is sure because it is by His grace and power. We have nothing to fear.

So here on the mountain top, looking back on all God has done, Paul asks five questions. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31). *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* (Romans 8:32). *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?* (Romans 8:33). *Who is he who condemns?* (Romans 8:34). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (Romans 8:35). "The apostle hurls these questions out into space, as it were, defiantly, triumphantly, challenging any creature in heaven or earth or hell to answer them or to deny the truth that is contained in them. But there is no answer, for nobody and nothing can harm the redeemed people of God" (John R.W. Stott as quoted in Romans, Volume 2, James Montgomery Boice).

Outline of Romans 8:31-39

- I. No Charge Can Stand Against God's Elect - Romans 8:31-34
- II. Nothing Can Separate Us from Christ's Love - Romans 8:35-39

I. No Charge Can Stand Against God's Elect - Romans 8:31-34

Through his series of questions, Paul shows that Christians can face the future triumphantly because God is for us!

- A. *What then shall we say to these things?* - Romans 8:31

These things may refer to what Paul has just written in Romans 8:28-30 concerning God's purpose for all Christians. Or perhaps it refers to all that Paul has written in Chapter 8 concerning the Christian's freedom from condemnation and blessings of the Spirit. However, most commentators take *these things* to refer to all that Paul has written thus far in his letter to the Romans. "These things" embraces the whole display of free grace to lost sinners in the letter thus far (New Geneva Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers). *What then shall we say* introduces Paul's conclusion which he expresses in a series of rhetorical questions which do not seek an answer because the answer is clear from what has already been written.

- B. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* - Romans 8:31

The omnipotent God, Sovereign Creator of all things and to Whom all things are subject, is for us! The statement "*God is for us*" is a concise summary of the gospel. God is on our side, not of course as a subservient ally who can be mobilized for the accomplishment of our designs, but in the way indicated by the gospel events,

as our Lord who has claimed us for Himself" (Romans, A Shorter Commentary, C.E.B. Cranfield). Of course there will be opposition in the Christian life, but none that can ever destroy our faith and God's purpose for us. "With God *for us* it makes not the slightest particle of difference who is against us. No foe can prevail against people who are supported by a God...who in order to bring salvation to sinners, works all things for good, foreknows them, predestines them, calls them, justifies them, and glorifies them" (The Epistle to the Romans, Leon Morris).

- C. *How shall He not...freely give us all things?* - Romans 8:32

God has already given us His own Son, the greatest gift He had to give. If He gave His own Son to die for us when we were helpless sinners and enemies (Romans 5:6-10), what blessing of salvation would He withhold now that we are reconciled and adopted as His very own children? "When it is here said that God will GIVE us all things, we are reminded that all the good things that we obtain or hope for are from God, who is the Author of every good and perfect gift" (Exposition of Romans, Robert Haldane).

- 1. *He...did not spare His own Son* - 8:32

God has many sons by adoption (Romans 8:15), but Jesus Christ is the *only begotten Son* of the Father (John 3:16). Paul shows the special relationship between the Father and Son by specifying Christ as His *own Son*.

In saying that *God did not spare His own Son*, Paul means that God did not hold back one bit of the full judgment which fell upon Christ. *It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief* (Isaiah 53:10).

- 2. *But delivered Him up for us all* - 8:32

"The Father delivered over His own Son to the damnation and abandonment which sin merited. There was no amelioration of the condemnation executed upon Him; Gethsemane and Calvary are the proofs" (The Epistle to the Romans, John Murray). It was all part of God's eternal plan: *this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God* (Acts 2:23, NASB).

God did it for *us all*, meaning those whom Paul has been writing about, believers.

- D. *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?* - Romans 8:33

This is rhetorical question which should be taken in the same way as a denial that anyone dare do such a thing! The reason is not that no charges will be brought,

but that no charge will ever stand. Christians do have accusers: our own conscience (Romans 2:15), the world, and satan. But all charges are brought in vain against God's elect. "The charges are worthy only of contempt" (The Epistle to the Romans, John Murray).

1. God's elect - 8:33

The word *elect* means "chosen." It literally signifies being "picked out" or "selected". Christians are the *elect*: chosen in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), chosen to be adopted as sons (Ephesians 1:5), chosen for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10), chosen to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29), and for glory (Romans 9:23).

2. It is God who justifies - 8:33

Paul answers his own question by stating that God is the One who justifies. This is the all-sufficient answer to every accusation. The elect of God do not need to fear any accuser because God is the Just Judge who has already dealt with any charges which might be brought against us. And He has acquitted us! God's elect have been *justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (Romans 3:24).

E. Who is he who condemns? - Romans 8:34

Here is another rhetorical question which needs no answer. Those who cannot be accused (8:33) cannot be condemned. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul writes, *We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*. Christ is the *One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead* (Acts 10:42). See also Acts 17:31 and Romans 3:16. Because Jesus Christ is our Judge, Paul gives four reasons that the elect cannot be condemned: Christ the Judge died (for our sins), Christ the Judge has risen (for our justification), Christ the Judge is at the right hand of God, and Christ the Judge makes intercession for us.

1. It is Christ who died - 8:34

Paul has previously written that Christ died as a propitiation for our sins (Romans 3:25). Christ died to reconcile us to God (Romans 5:10) and His death resulted in our justification (Romans 5:18). In His death, Christ freed us from sin (Romans 6:6-7) and fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law (Romans 8:3-4). *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:1, also 6:3).

2. Christ...furthermore is also risen - 8:34

In His death, Christ condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). In raising Christ from the dead, God pronounced

the acquittal from all the sins which He bore in His body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Christ was *delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification* (Romans 4:25). Those who have been justified have a brand new life because Christ was raised from the dead (Romans 6:4).

3. Who is even at the the right hand of God - 8:34

The right hand of God is the place of highest honor. At the right hand of God, Christ is *far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come* (Ephesians 1:21).

4. Who also makes intercession for us - 8:34

As explained so beautifully in the Book of Hebrews, Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest. Unlike the priests of the Old Testament which foreshadowed Him, Christ *because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them* (Hebrews 7:24-25).

Leon Morris comments, "Christ's presence at God's right hand as the one who died for sinners and rose again is itself an intercession" (The Epistle to the Romans).

II. Nothing Can Separate Us from Christ's Love - Romans 8:35-39

Paul asks his final rhetorical question and closes this section of his letter by expressing his confident security in Christ's love.

A. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? - Romans 8:35-36

Paul gives a list of things which one might imagine as separating oneself from Christ's love: *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword*. Paul had experienced all of these troubles except the last, and he would face that also. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, Paul lists the troubles he had endured: *labors more abundant..., stripes above measure..., prisons..., forty stripes minus one..., three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep..., in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*. None of these things had separated him from the love of Christ, and neither would death. As he later wrote in his letter

to the Philippians, *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain....for I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better* (1:21 and 23). Paul knew that Christ's love will always be there for us in spite of sufferings and even in death!

Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22 to show that our suffering is for the Lord's sake and not something new or unexpected. *For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

The Old Testament saints suffered great hardships for Christ's sake. Moses considered *the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt* (Hebrews 11:26). *Others were tortured..., still others had trial of mockings and scourgings..., of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth* (Hebrews 11:35-38).

B. *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us* - Romans 8:37

Supreme victory is always the case!

1. *We are more than conquerors* - 8:37

"We always struggle and yet emerge" (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, Romans and Thessalonians, John Calvin). And yet it is not just emerging. We overconquer. "So great is the victory that is secured by the loving work of Christ that Paul in Romans 8:37 finds "nikao" (to conquer) too weak a term. He thus adopts the rare 'hypernikao.' In every test we win the supreme victory; we are 'more than conquerors'" (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Geoffrey W. Bromiley).

2. *Through Him who loved us* - 8:37

The fact that Paul uses the past tense of love, *loved*, directs us back to the cross. *Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us* (Ephesians 5:2). The love which Christ showed us by His death on the cross abides with us today and will never let us go.

C. Paul's confidence - Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other

created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No power in the universe will ever be able to separate us from the love of God as shown in Christ! Paul is sure, confident, and certain of his conclusion. At the end of His life he wrote *For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day* (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul knew that nothing could separate God's elect from God's love and eternal purpose which is grounded in the love of Jesus Christ. He knew that to die meant to be with Christ (Philippians 1:21-23). He knew that neither life's pleasures nor life's troubles can ever diminish God's great purpose. No spiritual power, good or bad, can stand in the way because Christ has already won (Ephesians 1:21-22 Colossians 2:15). No circumstances in our lives, no power, no created thing, nothing from the highest heaven to the lowest hell can come between us and victory in Christ's love.

Applications

1. "The love of God, and not human merit or power, is the proper ground of confidence. This love is infinitely great, as is manifested by the gift of God's own Son; and it is unchangeable" (Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Charles Hodge). Where is your confidence? Do you stand tenuously on the ground of your own effort or do you rest in the secure love of God poured out in His own Son?
2. God gave His own Son for you? What can you give back to Him?
3. Troubles and sufferings have filled the lives of God's people throughout history, but they can never destroy Christ's love for His own. How does this give you hope and assurance in your own troubles? How will it help you to be more than a conqueror?
4. In all the universe, evil is already a conquered enemy and the rest of nature is caught up in the same hope and longing which fills every Christian (Romans 8:19-22). Does this give you hope and confidence, as it did Paul? Does it remove any doubts concerning God's love? How will you thank God for His constant, unchanging love toward you?

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen* (Jude 24-25).

Day Three: Read Romans 9:4-5.

Acts 7:32

Galatians 3:16-18

Hebrews 9:1-6

9. a. What do you learn about Christ from Romans 9:5?
- b. How does Colossians 1:16-19 explain Christ as *over all*?
- c. ? (Thought Question) Can you think of some blessings you have as a Christian which have come through the Jews?

Day Four: Read Romans 9:6-9.

10. a. What possible problem does Paul bring up concerning the word of God?
- b. Why might some think that *the word of God has taken no effect*? Remember all the privileges which God had granted Israel and view these in the light of Romans 10:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 1:23.
11. a. What statement does Paul make to refute the thought of the failure of God's word to Israel?
- b. Who does Paul use as an example to explain this?
12. a. Who designated Abraham's true seed and how did He do so? See also Genesis 21:12.
- b. What other children did Abraham have when God spoke to Him (Genesis 21:12 as in Romans 9:7)? See Genesis 16:1-2 and 15 for help.
13. a. What was the *word of promise*? Give verse.
- b. From all you have learned in this passage, why was Isaac and not Ishmael *counted as the seed*?

Day Five: Read Romans 9:10-13. (This passage relates to Genesis 25:21-26.)

14. Who does Paul use as an additional example to show that God's word is effective and that: *they are not all Israel who are of Israel*?

15. a. What statement does Paul record which God made to Rebecca? Give verse.

b. At what point in time was this statement made? Why is this significant?

c. On what basis was God's choice made? See Romans 9:11.

d. What factors had no influence on God's choice?

16. a. What distinction is made between Jacob and Esau in Romans 9:13?

b. What do you think this means?

Day Six: Review Romans 9:1-13.

17. The people of Israel were chosen by God to receive all the privileges Paul listed in Romans 9:4-5. What are some special privileges you enjoy as a man or woman of God today?

18. From what you have learned in this passage, have God's promises to Israel failed? Why or why not?

19. How does Romans 9:1-13 demonstrate the sovereignty of God?