

# “More than Conquerors: The Greatest Chapter in the Bible, part 4” // Romans 8:29–39 // *Romans #18*

Summit: Let me **welcome back our student ministry** who got back late last weekend after several days at camp with over 700 of our middle and high school students. They had 21 POF!

Stand if you were there, either as a student or a volunteers. Volunteers, there is a special place in heaven for you.

**Romans 8, if you have your Bible.** P. 54/Journal

I’m not sure if you’ve heard the name Peter Deyneka--he was a Russian immigrant who fled to America in the early 20th century to escape the Communist Revolution.

- **After arriving in Chicago in 1914 he became a Christian**, went to Moody Bible College and was then powerfully used by God in both America and Russia as a testimony to the saving power of Jesus.

He tells this great story about his escape from Russia.

- His **parents had sacrificed everything** to get him a boat ticket to America.
- Because his **family was poor**, he got on the boat with virtually nothing. He had no money; just a knapsack with a few clothes,

and his mom had stuffed some stale, hard bread into his bag for him to eat on the journey.

- He said that **throughout the journey** he would often look in on everyone in the dining hall, wishing that he could have some of the glorious meals they were eating.

Well, **some of the sailors told him** that if he helped them with their work that he could eat what they ate--**still very meager portions:** gruel and hardtack type of stuff--but it was at least more than his moldy bread.

He said **it wasn’t until the last day of the trip** that he realized that three full meals a day came with the purchase of his ticket.<sup>1</sup>

**Because he couldn’t read what was written on the ticket, he didn’t know what he was entitled to.**

The Apostle Paul indicates in Romans 8 that **many Christians are in the same predicament** with their spiritual journey. We know that receiving Christ as savior grants us a ticket to heaven, but we don’t fully understand **all the benefits** included in the price of the ticket.

**We left off last week considering God’s 4-part promise to his children in suffering:**

- **Part 1:** God has **determined to make us more like Jesus** and he now pursues that purpose through all things in our lives.
- **Part 2:** **Our journey ends with the redemption of our body**, where our pain and sorrow is transformed into healing and joy.
- In the meantime, **part 3: The Spirit abides with us and prays for us.** This is our “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.”
- **Part 4:** Through all of this, we have the **assurance that what God started**, he’ll finish.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1987-07-29-8702250266-story.html>; Cf. Erwin Lutzer, delivered on November 23, 2008, “You’re About to Inherit it All,” from series Children of an Awesome God, sermon on Romans 8:31-32.

Let's pick up again in vs. 29, because that where Paul lays out in concise form the purpose God is doing in our lives: 29 For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, 30 and those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

Some big words here:

- **foreknew:** Foreknew doesn't simply mean that God knows facts beforehand, as in simply sees the future.
  - When Scripture says **God 'knows' someone**, it means he has a relationship with them.
  - (**For example**, when Jesus says to a group of people in **Matthew 7**, 'I never knew you,' he doesn't mean he's had never heard of them before. He means he had no relationship with them.<sup>2</sup>)
  - So, **saying God "foreknew" us** means he **set his love on us before** we even existed.
- *Those God foreknew, Paul says, he **predestined:*** To 'predestine' means to determine the destination beforehand. God has **predestined those he foreknew** to end up looking like Jesus. That was the purpose for which he saved us.
  - (Now I know for some of you the "p" word brings up all kinds of questions, so I have two things for you:
  - **First, don't shoot me**, I'm just the mailman.
  - **Second, I promise next week** when we get into Romans 9 completely solve all your theological mysteries for you, or your money back.
  - For now, I just want to focus on **Paul's motive in bringing** this up. He's not trying **to start a theological argument or even delve into the mysteries** of God.
  - **He's trying to give you assurance:** *Before time began, God had a purpose for you and nothing now can deter him from that purpose.*
- *Those God foreknew and predestined, he also **called:*** The **first time God's foreknowledge and predestination really** broke into

your life was when you **experienced the call**--which basically means you were drawn to want to know him.

- **Sometimes people say, "How do I know if God foreknew and predestined me?"** Easy: You had a desire to know God.
- **John 6:44**, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day." (**That means:** if you had any desire to come to Jesus, that is evidence of the call--apart from that, you would have had no desire)
- **Phil 2:13**, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (If you had a desire to please and know God, that was a call)
- **One more: 2 Thess 1:4-5**, For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you,<sup>5</sup> because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. (If you experienced conviction of sin and were convinced of the truth of the gospel, you were chosen)
- Now, there can be **some mysterious interplay** with our choosing and God's sovereignty.
  - Some of you feel like you were drafted into God's army; others of you felt like you enlisted.
  - At the end of the day, **both elements are there**.
  - **If you belong to Jesus**, it's because you chose him; **but if you chose him** it's because God was drawing you.
- *Those he **foreknew and predestined and called** he also **justified:*** Accepting God's call means putting your faith in Jesus, which means believing that Jesus died in your place and claiming his sacrifice as your own. When you do that, all **guilt from sin is removed. You are justified**, which I told you some people express concisely as: **"just as if I'd never sinned."**
- *Those he foreknew and predestined and called and justified he also **glorified:*** This is the **final stop on the destination**.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Keller, *Romans 8-16 for You*

- Tim Keller says: **“To be glorified means to have all sin eradicated** and to be made perfect in body and soul.”<sup>3</sup> (Just like Jesus)
- Now, if some of you were honest, you might admit that being remade just like Jesus doesn’t sound all that appealing, because **maybe you grew up with the same image of Jesus** I grew up with, based on all the pictures I saw of him as a kid, sauntering around with his perfect beard and wavy hair with this pensive, detached, too-spiritual-for-this-world look on his face. (In **every picture I ever saw of Jesus growing up** he had the same expression... Oily. Olan Mills Jesus. As a middle schooler I didn’t really think, “That’s a guy I want to grow up and be like.” He didn’t honestly look like a guy I’d even want to hang out with or teach my Sunday School class.
- **But--John 10:10; Ps 16:11.**
- Which means to be remade in Christ’s image is to be fully alive--everything in you, physically, emotionally and spiritually, works like it is supposed to. No sin. No corruption. Which connects you to a joy and fullness of life you **don’t even have the capacity to comprehend yet**. I compared it last week to showing a Money or a Rembrandt to a kindergartner. They don’t even have the capacity to appreciate it yet.
- **DMLJ** says maybe the **most astounding thing** about this passage is that Paul speaks of **this future glorification in the past tense.**
  - *Those foreknew he called... he glorified.* The glorified is as past tense as the foreknew..
  - **It’s as good as if it’s already done!** It’s as finished in God’s mind as foreknowing you is.<sup>4</sup>

**This is God’s unalterable purpose.**

**Now, get this:** he **paid the highest price to accomplish it** (the blood of his son) and he **supplied the greatest power to guarantee it** (the

<sup>3</sup> TK, Romans 8–16 for You, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Lloyd-Jones, *Romans Chapter 8:17–39*, 258

power of the resurrection in his indwelling Holy Spirit) and **guaranteed it with his sovereign purpose** that nothing can deter.

So, **Paul ends this bold declaration** with an overflow of praise that takes the form of **5 rhetorical questions**.

- These are questions on which to build your life.
- They are what DMLJ calls **“logic on fire.”**<sup>5</sup>

**<sup>31</sup> What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?**

**1. If an all-powerful God has purposed our good, why would we fear opposition?**

**He’s not saying no one will ever oppose us**, just that nothing that opposes us can thwart the good purposes of God toward us.

I know **some of you come in here facing all kinds** of opposition. You say, **“Who can be against me? Try: A bad boss; or an antagonistic spouse; inward struggles and addictions; health problems; difficult kids.**

**Paul is not saying that the Christian will not experience opposition**--just that no opposition ever overcomes him. Because, while **the struggles he faces are big, the God behind him** is even bigger.

Growing up, **I always felt so safe around my dad**, because I assumed my dad was omnipotent.

- In my mind he was the strongest, smartest man alive. **Like I’ve told you--he could fix anything** with a pocketknife. He **wasn’t scared** of anything--bees, snakes, nothing deterred him. **And he was strong.** I was positive he could have whooped any of your dads.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Keller, Romans 8–16 for You, 53–55.

- **In fact, I think he still can.** He's a member at Summit now, and sits pretty close to the stage, and I know if any of you **pick a fight with me, he'll handle you.**
- The bottom line was that **anytime I was around him, I felt safe--** not because there were no dangers--but because I assumed my dad was bigger than the dangers.

**The way to remove fear from your life is not to isolate yourself from all dangers--**because that's impossible--but to believe the promises of a God who is bigger and better than the dangers.

- I was **reading a woman's Bible study the other day (You say, "You read WBS?" Yeah, and if you got a problem with it, I'll send my dad after you.** Hey, **women make up half** of our audience! I need to read their Bible studies.)
  - But **this study had a line in it** from that famous description of the godly woman in Prov 31. It says that **the godly woman "has no fear of the future."**
  - I thought, "Is that even possible? With all the things that can go wrong in your life, how can you "face the future without worry or fear?"
  - **Does the godly woman have no fear about the future** because she's got enough money in the bank she'll always live comfortably, and she's in great shape with perfect health; and she's in a perfect marriage to a doting husband who is also in great health; she's got perfect kids with no issues getting straight A's in school; and she's surrounded by perfect friends who also have no issues?
  - **Does she have no fear of the future** because all the right politicians are in office and everything seems to be trending in the right direction?
  - If **that's your idea of the fearless life**, good luck with that.

The **godly woman has no fear of the future** because she **knows that an all-powerful, Sovereign God** has purposes in her life he will not fail to accomplish, whose presence and power are with her no matter

what, and **who transforms any of the things she's afraid of into an agent of his purpose.** PAUSE

**This is what David felt in Psalm 23, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are with me."** The 'Valley of the Shadow of Death' does not sound like a great place to live. But David says, "**I can live there** for a while for awhile, if I must, if you are with me, because **you are stronger than anything in this valley.**"

*This ties into question # 2:* <sup>32</sup> He did not even spare his own Son but offered him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything?

## **2. If God gave up his most precious possession to save us, why worry about any of the rest of our needs?**

They say the **value something has** is shown only by what someone is willing to pay for it.

- **Joby Martin calls it the eBay rule.** You may have something in your house that you feel is really, really valuable. Great. Put it on eBay, and you'll find out it means about \$6 to everybody else. That collector's edition of VHS Rambo tapes you think is such a collectible, that Nicolas Cage pillow--not worth that much.
- Or, **do you ever go to a yard sale where everything is ridiculously overpriced?** "I realize this feels really valuable and sentiment to you, but it's just an old lamp to the rest of us."
- **Or the opposite:** To me, the **only thing interesting** on those TV shows like American Pickers or Antiques Roadshow is when somebody has an item that they don't think is very valuable—"I got this at a yard sale for \$3"—and then suddenly, they meet someone who's willing to pay \$30,000 for it. **(BTW, this happened to my family when my grandmother died... she had no idea. We had no idea. I kicked a soccer ball around in that room. It was then I remembered she wanted to leave me that room as my inheritance.**
- *If we'd known, that would have changed how we treated it.)*

**God sacrificed Jesus to redeem you, and that puts an extraordinary amount of value now on you.** You've been purchased with the universe's highest price. And that should give you an **extraordinary amount of confidence** going through life.

- **Why would God put that kind of investment** into you and then not supply what you need to accomplish his will?
- Why would he **rescue you from sin** but not help in your marriage?
- Why **supply for you the Holy Spirit but withhold wisdom** from you in your parenting?
- **Sometimes when I am counseling people who are worried about** some decision. *"What if I make the wrong one? I tell them:* "It's not like God is going to hide his will from you. He's got more invested in your life now than you do!" Relax! **Sheep prayer**

Here's a verse I've been meditating on recently: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." Luke 12:32

- I love that promise--Soak that in. I feel like **every word is specifically chosen** to help me in a time of worry. It's an **explosion of metaphors**. "Fear not":
  - "little flock..."
    - I know you are a sheep and you feel confused and helpless sometimes..
  - "it is your Father's good pleasure..."
    - Not, "your employer's agreement to pay"
    - Or, "Your slavemaster's duty to provide your lodging"
    - It is "your Father's pleasure to give." It's in his nature. It's his deepest delight. He's like a dad who delights to take care of his kids<sup>6</sup>
- To give you the kingdom." It's his kingdom; he's got sovereign power over it all.

<sup>6</sup> See John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, Demand #37.

- Normally, they **tell you not to mix metaphors**, but this is a good one. God is like a tender Shepherd, a compassionate Father, and an all-powerful King all wrapped up into one.
- And if that king did not even spare his own Son but offered him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything?"
- And if he raised Jesus back from the dead, is there anything that can thwart his purposes?"

*Let me do questions 3 and 4 together...* <sup>33</sup> Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies.

And then he builds on that in the next verse: <sup>34</sup> Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.

**3. If Jesus, the Judge, was judged in my place, how could I feel guilt? AND 4. If God has accepted me, whose disapproval need I fear?**

Scripture tells us God has **committed all judgment to the Son.**<sup>7</sup> That means everyone will eventually stand before Jesus.

**And that means the one who will judge me one day** has died in my place. The one who sits on the throne who will Judge the whole world bore my punishment.

- Illus. **Apple store:** Laying out my case: "I go to BCC." "Oh, so you know I'm trustworthy." I don't think he did me any favors, but it helps knowing that the one in the position of judge knows you and likes you.
- **One day the Judge of everything is going to look that way at me**, because not only does he know and love me, he bears in his body the evidence of my justification. The judge on the throne bears proof in his body that I can't be condemned.
- And even now, Paul says, **this Judge stands there interceding for me based on his finished work**. I love how **the Apostle John** expresses this: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to

<sup>7</sup> John 5:44

forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all righteousness.” 1 John 1:9. I love that word “just.” Not merciful. Faithful and *just*. How I used to see it... It is just.

- **And so, Paul reasons, if you are sure God has accepted you, why would you be worried about anyone else’s approval?** Why still struggle with feelings of guilt or inferiority or condemnation?
  - I know many of you **struggle with feeling like you're not enough**, and that feeling comes from all sorts of places—from your home life, maybe you had a really critical or even abusive father--or from things that have been said about or done to you.
  - **And just memorizing these verses won't make those feelings magically go away.**
  - You overcome those feelings by realizing that you have a Heavenly Father who approves of you, who thought you were worth saving, declares you justified and fully acceptable in his sight, and has a plan for you that is greater than what anyone else thinks or says about you.

**Let me deal with one objection: Sometimes people say, “Well, I know God has forgiven me, but I can’t forgive myself.”**

- So you think you are greater than God? That your opinion of you matters more than God’s does?
- **Let me tell you what is happening when someone says that:** They have conditioned their identity on living up to some standard of excellence they think they need to reach. (It’s usually one established by comparison)--**in order to be worthy**, they have to reach a level of success, obtain a moral standard, or be a certain kind of person in comparison to others. Am I a **successful enough man?** Good enough **mom?**
- **But I ask you: is your worth established by the good you’ve accomplished or the evil you’ve avoided?** If so, you’re doomed. You have worth because of what God says about you.
- **Your identity is established by what the most important person in your life thinks about you.** If that person is you, or someone else whose opinion you live for, or a group of people, you’ll

**always struggle with feelings of guilt or disapproval**, no matter what God says.

- **You need to re-establish God** as the most important Person in your life.
- ***I am who YOU say I am.***

**I can’t help but think here of one of my favorite stories** I love to tell here...

- **My 15th anniversary here:** staff made fun of all the stories I repeat--they wove them together in one long, continuous story. Quite fantastic.
- In fact, I’ve **heard it described like this:** you know how in the old days before they had clocks and calendars they would tell time by “how many moons” had occurred? “He stayed there for 14 moons.” You call date how long you’ve been at TSC by how many times you’ve heard this story. “I’m a 3-soccer story member.” That means you have been here about 9 years, because it’s about every 3 years.
- But I tell our staff: “First, if God entrusts you with a good story, you have to be a good steward of it and tell it often.” Second, there’s at least 3000 people here this weekend that weren’t here last time I told this story. None of Garner campus was here. I’m telling it for their sake. Don’t be selfish.”
- **So, here goes: Soccer story:** Look to Jesus. He’s the most important! If he is for me, who else am I worried about?

**Finally, question 5:**

<sup>35</sup> Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

<sup>36</sup> As it is written:

*‘Because of you  
we are being put to death all day long;*

*we are counted  
as sheep to be slaughtered.'*

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.<sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded 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 any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### 5. If we can't be separated from the love of Christ, is there really anything in the universe to fear?

Paul lists out all kinds of dangerous things--things he was dealing with:

- **Persecution.** Being treated unfairly.
- **A famine.** We might add job loss. Unexpected medical bills.. A stock market crash. A business partner stabbing you in the back.
- **Angels or Rulers.** Demonic powers or earthly ones. In our context: the other party getting into power. The leftist agenda. Nationalism. Hollywood.
- **Sword:** Violence. Terrorism. We might add a loss of religious liberty that leads us to being penalized for living out their convictions.

Paul says, 'None of these things can get in the way of God's love or the completion of that love's purpose.'

**What's interesting:** Paul lists these things out in answer to the question "**Who can separate us from the love of God?**"). You normally wouldn't think of those things as a "who". They are inanimate objects.

Why not say "**What**"? Was that a **typo**?

**I don't think so.** A couple of reasons. First, because **these things often feel like personal attacks**. Like someone is trying to take us down. **But** second, Paul wants to set up a contrast with a greater Who. **No matter who you have against you, you've got a Who** on your team than any who on their team.

**Your dad is stronger.**

**In fact, he's not just stronger**, he's going to make you "more than a conqueror." Think about that phrase: "**more than a conqueror.**" How can you be "more than a conqueror?

- love how John Piper explains it: ("**More than Conquerors?**") "A conqueror defeats his enemy, but one who is more than a conqueror subjugates his enemy. A conqueror nullifies the purpose of his enemy; one who is more than a conqueror makes the enemy serve his own purposes. A conqueror strikes down his foe; one who is more than a conqueror makes his foe his slave."<sup>8</sup>
- God **not only delivers us from our suffering**, he makes our pain and suffering *serve his purposes*.
- **Affliction is made the servant of God in his purposes.** **2 Cor 4:17**, "**This light and momentary affliction is preparing [working, or bringing about] for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.**"
- What Satan meant for evil, God uses for good, because God uses these attacks to work in us an even greater weight of glory than we would have experienced without them. **The Who of your salvation** is greater than the who of your opposition and he transforms the opposition into the servants of his purpose.

This also explains that strange quote Paul gives in the middle.

<sup>36</sup> As it is written

*'Because of you*

<sup>8</sup> John Piper, [More than a Conqueror?](#)

*we are being put to death all day long;*

*we are counted*

*as sheep to be slaughtered.'*

The inclusion of this **verse always confused me**--b/c right in the middle of this soaring rhetoric Paul, Paul quotes a rather depressing lyric: "Because of you, we are being put to death all day long, we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered."

Paul is **employing a teaching technique common to Rabbis** of his day called a "*remez*". They would **sing one lyric of a popular song**, and your mind would sing the rest. Like if I sing "*Ooh, I wanna dance with...*" your mind fills in the rest.

## (MUSIC)

- **Psalm 44 was a well-known song of lament written at a dark time in Israel's history** when it seemed like God had forsaken Israel because of her sin. Israel's enemies were all around them, crushing them, and so the psalmist asks if God had taken his eyes off of them forever.
- **Romans 8 is the gospel's answer to that: NO.**<sup>9</sup> If not even our sin could separate us from the love of God, could anything else?
  - If God didn't turn his back on us when we had scorned him, turned our backs on him, and crucified him, will he turn his back on us now?
- **Some of you are living in Psalm 44 today.** You think, 'Pastor, if you only knew...' **But can I tell you something? If you are living in that dark, desperate, hopeless place of Psalm 44**, you are **PRECISELY** the person Paul is talking about here.
- Your **Psalm 44 is being swallowed up in Romans 8.**

<sup>9</sup> Joby Martin, "More Than Conquerors", sermon on Romans 8:31-39, preached at Church of Eleven22; June 3, 2018

- Do you *feel like a sheep set to be slaughtered*? Paul calls you **more than a conqueror**.
- Do you *feel like darkness is your only friend*? Paul says that not even death itself can harm you.
- **God's purpose is unchangeable**, his power is unchallengeable and his love is unconditional, so there is nothing I have to fear.
- **I am who you say I am**; the Who of my salvation is greater than the who of my opposition **and I am more than a conqueror**.

Again, this is **logic on fire**." Pushing the gospel to its logical conclusions! **DMLJ**: "*Think, man! Are you afraid (v. 31)? You aren't thinking! Are you worried (v. 32)? You aren't thinking! Are you feeling guilty (v. 33)? You aren't thinking! Embrace the logic of free grace and justification! These aren't dry doctrines; they are life itself. And if you are not living right now with overwhelming assurance and power, you haven't really understood them!*"<sup>10</sup>

**All those things that** oppose you: *persecution and famine and sword, earthly and demonic powers*--**those are just about your situation**. They can't touch your identity.

***Listen, struggling believer*: You aren't your situation**. Your life is **not defined by your situation**. Your life is defined by who you are in Christ.

In all the pain and suffering and questions and confusion--you are the treasured child of a Heavenly Father who:

- set his love on you before you were born;
- who sought you when you ran away from him;
- who offered his own body to buy you back;
- Who conquered the grave itself on your behalf, and in whose presence every knee will bow and tongue will confess that he is Lord,

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Tim Keller, *Romans 8-16 for You*: 55.



- ***and who now works all things together*** for his good purposes in your life.

**If that Savior is for you.**

- What is there to be **afraid of**? What is there to fear or dread or worry about?
- **Who can stop the Lord Almighty?** He's roaring with power and fighting our battles, and every knee will bow before him--who can stop the Lord?
- **Who is there who can condemn you, discourage you, disrespect you** or marginalize you?
- What **unexpected news could devastate you; what unexpected diagnosis** send you spiraling into despair?
- You **have no need to fear any part of the future** no matter how much famine, nakedness, persecution or sword it contains!

**And so, we should worship like Paul** in that promise, and sing with that kind of confidence.

**And realize that** sometimes God gives us this kind of pain so we can put the excellencies of God on display for someone else, because often the **only way people can see the glories and excellencies of God** is to see them through the hope you possess in his promises amidst the tragedies of your life.

**Watch this:** Kylie White WY1 video