

Christ is risen! Today is a day of great celebration. It is great that you are in church on Easter Sunday. Interestingly, the French have a saying about church attendance. *“He who is near the church is often far from God.”* Presence in a place of worship does not equal worship! They also speak of a *“frog of the holy-water basin”* to describe someone who is extremely devout.

On this resurrection day, we need to get past **tradition** to the **truth** of the resurrection. But further than that, we need to encounter the **triumphant One**, the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been thinking about the life and death struggle of our spiritual lives. No amount of ritual or resurrection celebrations will ever answer our human condition. Only Jesus can do this!

Proposition

We have been considering Romans 8, **“More Than Victors”**. This chapter is a celebration of the victory that Jesus has won! Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus made it possible for us to share in His victory over sin and death. We looked at the victory Jesus gives over **condemnation**. Then we considered the victory Jesus gives over **frustration** and suffering.

In Romans 8:31-39, we will see the **victory over separation**. Separated! It strikes fear into the heart of young children and caring parents alike! But we are not talking about a period of separation but rather being in a position completely cut off from God! In Christ, God has provided a way for humanity to no longer be separated. His loyal love is the guarantee! Consider three arguments.

[A] Rhetorical – vv. 31-35

Who “talks you down off the ledge”? When the tears are flowing and you are in deep distress, it is not a time for dialogue. We all need someone steady who can offer those crucial, rhetorical questions that help us step back from the brink of despair.

This is Paul’s approach in verses 31-35. He begins with “what shall we say?” (v.31) To what was he referring? In the big picture, this is Romans 1:1 to 8:30. In short, we might say “new life in Christ’s resurrection power” – see verse 11. Being transformed from the status of separated to “in Christ” is at the root of five rhetorical questions.

1. **Who is loyal to us? (v.31)** – this is literally, “God on behalf of us” describing deep commitment
2. **Who is invested in us? (v.32)** – same “for us” in view of suffering savior, adopted (vv.15-17)
3. **Who is justifying us? (v.33)** – this is God’s ongoing cleansing, conforming (vv.28-29) work
4. **Who is interceding for us? (v.34)** – Jesus is our resurrected High Priest; Heb 4:14-16 (v.26)
5. **Who is loving us? (v.35)** – seven factors are mentioned to emphasize God’s loyal love

The answer to all these questions is obvious. Nothing can or will separate the believer from God’s love. That is why present difficulty is incomparable with the glory that God has reserved for us (v.18).

Are you in the grip of God’s love? Are you in relationship with Him through Christ? *“Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?”* Paul asked King Agrippa in Acts 26:8.

[B] Historical – v. 36

Those to whom Paul was writing about reassurance were all too familiar with the sword. This verse takes us to the OT and the story of Israel. God's people were often disobedient and punished. Yet, the OT is also the story – in anticipation – of forgiveness in Christ. Verse 32 alludes to Abraham binding (*aqedah*) Isaac on the altar (Gen 22). Verse 33 reflects on our suffering Savior (Isaiah 53).

Verse 36 is a quote of Psalm 44:22. This is a startling reminder to believers: do not be surprised by suffering! Sometimes it is punitive. It is always purifying. Growing to know Jesus will involve “*the power of His resurrection*” but also “*participation in his sufferings*”. This what Paul describes as “*attaining to the resurrection*” or coming into greater conformity to the lifestyle of Jesus (Philippians 3:10-11). The first followers of Jesus were persecuted for proclaiming His resurrection. They were “*rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for [Jesus] name*” (Acts 5:41).

To be a taxi driver in the city of London, one must complete lengthy, rigorous preparation. So demanding is this process that medical studies have shown the hippocampus changes in the process! [READ MORE](#) Christians must **rethink** suffering – it does not separate us from God!

[C] Unequivocal – vv. 37-38

In verse 37 we come to one of those “heavenly however” or “colossal conjunctions”! The term is “but” (*αλλα*) – translated “no” in the NIV). This sets up a great contrast to the painful prospect noted in verse 36. In verses 37-38 we receive an invitation to face our problems in a profound way.

1. Live as a conqueror – v. 37

This is a profound contrast to the forces opposing the believer, most notably, the specter of separation. It is “*through the having loved us One*” that believers are enabled to “*overwhelmingly conquer*” (v.37). Can you be **more than** a gold medalist!? Believers are promised victory that goes beyond all victories, because it is won by King of Kings and Lord of Lords – see Revelation 5:9-10!

These troubles are not merely unpleasant things we have to get through, but actually the setting for a greater victory than we could have imagined – just as the Messiah's cross was not simply a ghastly event to be bravely borne, but actually his royal victory over all the powers. Yes, says verse 36, this is a deeply unpleasant place to be, *but – alla* – in all these things we are more than conquerors. (*Into The Heart of Romans*, N. T. Wright, Zondervan, 2023, 205)

2. Live with conviction – vv. 38-39

Paul stated that he was “convinced” or “persuaded” (*πεπεισμαι*). In verse 39 we are asked again to consider separation. And as if seven factors (v.35) were not enough, in the final two verses there are ten more comparisons! Notice that none are about salvation but common human experience.

Conclusion – see *Digging Deeper*

Easter weekend allowed me time to sort and discard old files. It is interesting to look back at six decades in a file drawer! Maybe this Easter you are reflecting on hopes, expectations, even regrets.

In his book *The Gospel of the Resurrection* (MacMillan, 1913) Brooke Foss Westcott offers this proof of Jesus' resurrection: transformed lives. The disciples' agenda for Jesus was shattered by His crucifixion. Then they encountered the risen Christ. The resurrection was **clear** and **powerful** enough to turn disappointed dreamers into victorious voices for the Gospel! [READ MORE](#)

The resurrection is clear and power for your life too! Will you repent of sin and receive Jesus today?