

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

1. Future glory (18-30)

In verse 18 Paul says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." This verse tells us that even though we have a living hope in the kingdom of God in our hearts, we have much suffering to overcome in this present time. Paul speaks of present sufferings and future glory because the world still has not been restored to its former perfect state. This passage tells us that man and nature suffer together until the day of future glory, the day when Jesus come again.

First, creation is waiting. "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed." The "creation" means the natural world, including animals and trees and everything. All nature waits eagerly for the time when the children of God will be completely set free from sin and death, and glorified with Jesus, the day when God's work of redemption is finished.

The paradise of Eden was lost when man sinned. After man sinned, God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground because of you." (Ge 3:17) But God subjected it to frustration in hope that the creation would be liberated...(21) God is a God of hope. God's great vision for the restoration of his creation was shared by Isaiah: "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them...They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him and his place of rest will be glorious" (Isa 11:6-10).

The whole creation is still suffering the pains of childbirth (22). The pains of childbirth are pains full of hope, for through pain a new life is born into the world. So all creation eagerly waits for the day of future glory, the day when Jesus comes again to restore all things. Then all creation can serve the children of God (21) and glorify God the Creator. It is amazing that God included all nature and all the animals in his salvation plan. God wants to save the whole world and everything in it.

Second, we are waiting for adoption as sons. (23) Verse 23 says, "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." We are children of God, and the Spirit of God has already begun his work in us, changing us into the image of Jesus. He gives us a taste of heaven. He helps us in our weakness. He helps us pray. He intercedes for us in accordance with God's will. And what is God's will? God's will for us is that we be conformed to the likeness of his Son (29). God is working in us to restore his broken image, to mold us into the image of Jesus. This is the purpose of the gospel. For this, he predestined, called, justified and glorified us. He works in all the circumstances of life to accomplish his redemptive purpose in us who love him (28). He works in and through us to accomplish his redemptive purpose in the whole

world. When Jesus comes and establishes his messianic kingdom, he will complete the work of redeeming our bodies as well as the work of restoring all nature.

This is our glorious hope. Verse 24a says, 'In this hope we are saved. Although we suffer because we live as Christians in a hostile world, we have this glorious hope in God's kingdom based on God's sure promise of future glory. If our hope is in the things of the world, then we will surely be disappointed. But if we hope in God who promised to restore every leaf of every tree, who promised to give us a glorious resurrection body like that of Jesus, then we must wait patiently and prayerfully. Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? Worldly hope cannot be real hope, but hope in God's promises is sure hope.

3. More than conquerors (31-39)

Verse 31 says, "If God is for us, who can be against us? This verse tells us that there is a spiritual battlefield in our lives. In a physical battle we can have many second chances. But there is no second chance in the spiritual warfare. If we are defeated by Satan, then we become war prisoners of Satan and there is no way out. Verse 31 also tells us that there are victors and losers in life. God wants us to be victors in life through Jesus. On the other hand, Satan does his best to defeat us. How can we be victors in life? Verse 32 says, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Paul teaches the secret of victory. It is to believe God's love absolutely, knowing that God gave everything when he gave his only Son for our sins. Those who hold on to God's love will be victors in life. God gave his Son. He gave up what he could not give up. His love is absolute. Verse 34 says, "Who is he that condemns?" No person and no principle can defeat a Christian. It is because Christ Jesus who died is at the right hand of God and is interceding. No one can condemn Christians, for Christ who died for us defeated the powers of death and he is the judge of the living and the dead. Moreover, he prays for us. Those who seek to condemn us will be condemned.

Verse 35 says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" Paul's spiritual battle was a matter of life and death. But he conquered all hardship by believing the love of God, and he became more than a conqueror.

Verse 36 is a quotation of Psalm 44:22. It gives us some idea of how great was the Apostle Paul's suffering in his battle with Satan. But verses 37-39 tell us that there was no defeat for him. His victory in Christ gave him the spirit of a conqueror.

There are two kinds of people: There are losers in life and there are 'more than conquerors.' Losers in life are filled with a spirit of defeatism. Even though they win a battle, they feel defeated. But those who are more than conquerors are victors in life and are filled with a spirit of victory. They cannot be defeated by circumstances--even by their own failures. They may lose a few battles, but they have already won the war. We can be more than conquerors through Jesus who overcame all the elements of human fatalism on the cross.