

Sermon Text for September 17, 2017

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

II Samuel 12:1-7, Romans 8:33-37

“More than conquerors”

I have said that Romans 8 contains innumerable treasures, pieces of 8 and we have been sifting through, slowly but surely, these treasures. We began in July looking at Romans 8 and we will finish in a couple of weeks. Three months to get through one chapter. But look at what we have learned. Just last week we heard: If God is for us, who can be against us? God is definitely on our side, and you have responded this week with letting me know of times when you needed to be reminded of that. What another great promise. It doesn't matter who is against us because if God is for us, we can overcome all things.

Indeed this week we hear another precious promise that is again found in chapter 8. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Let's look at the victory, the promise that we have from our Savior found in these verses in Romans.

READ SCRIPTURE

Paul in verse 37 states in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Again, just like last week Paul says in all these things and so our first question needs to be, come on Greek scholars, what things? But this time we can go back just a few verses instead of all of chapter 8. We begin by looking at verses 33 and following.

Who will bring any charges against God's elect? Who is to condemn? What kind of language is this? This is all courtroom talk, specifically trying to find someone who is guilty. Yesterday the remaining Bronkema family took a road trip to Swarthmore to pick up our oldest daughter so we could transport her to Villanova to take the LSAT. We might have a lawyer in our family, that's okay, Stacy's side is full of lawyers. John Calvin was a lawyer. So he probably felt very comfortable with these verses in chapter 8.

Yesterday the law was in full effect in St. Louis. In this church we have police officers and first responders and I am always nervous speaking about these situations because I have never been either of them. I have also never been a black man, because if I were there is a 50/50 chance that I would have experienced jail, 100% chance that I would have experience traffic stop where I wondered what I had done wrong. Most of

you lived through the 60's and early 70's when just a few miles away black children were not allowed to swim a pool in the city until it eventually closed down. We live in a society and a culture and a country that if you are a person of color you are at a distinct disadvantage. It is just part of our system. The problem is that the people on the street who are protesting and the police officers who are being injured by the protests both want the same thing. We want a system that treats every single person fairly. We simply do not have that.

What does this have to do with the Bible? Is this political or is this biblical, you may ask? I cannot separate this issue from a God who in Jesus Christ told everyone that if He is for them, who can be against them? If God is for us, even if the system is against us, we shall overcome. But the Bible speaks very directly to Jesus dying on the cross for every single person. I'm sorry folks, but it doesn't seem like this issues is going away any time soon.

The language Paul uses in these verses is language that we hear almost exclusively in courtroom situations. Who will bring the charges? Who will condemn? And isn't it ironic that in all of Romans Paul has very clearly and unequivocally said, we are guilty. We are without a foot to stand on in court when we are faced with our sin. Look at Romans 3:23, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We are guilty. Then again Paul in Romans 6:23: for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul all throughout Romans sets us up by pointing out our sin and we have to realize that we really do deserve the accusations. But here all of a sudden in chapter 8 we hear a different story, we hear Paul Harvery's rest of the story. You have heard it said you were sinners, and right you are, but I say to you: who is going to bring the charges against God's elect, it is God who justifies. Who is to condemn, Christ Jesus, but look what he did for you.

An answer to the question of what things are we more than conquerors over, the response comes in the form of 3 whos found in verses 33-36. The first is found in verse 33: Who dares to bring charges against God's elect? We see in all of Scripture the trouble people get into in trying to bring their neighbor who has a splinter to condemnation when they themselves have a log. We see that in John with the adulterous woman.

But the most classic example of God's elect, God's chosen one brought to the floor is seen in the story of David and Nathan. David's most heinous sin is to send this good man, Uriah, to his death. Nathan makes an analogy of the sheep and the rich man and the poor man. The man should be put to death. You are the man with a long, bony finger of accusation. This is a courtroom. Who can bring charges against God's elect, God's predestined people? Only God.

The second who is who is in a position to condemn?

Zaleucus protected the city of Locri with very salutary and useful laws. His son was convicted on a charge of adultery and according to a law constituted by Zaleucus himself was due to lose both eyes. The whole community wished to spare the young man the necessity of punishment in honour of his father. For some time Zaleucus resisted, but in the end, overborne by the people's entreaties, he first gouged out one of his own eyes, then one of his son's, leaving the faculty of sight to them both. Thus he rendered to the law a due measure of retribution, by admirable balance of equity dividing himself between compassionate father and just lawgiver.

Paul says Jesus Christ is the only one who can condemn and yet Jesus took on our entire debt, not just a piece or a part of it but all of it. Isaiah states he was wounded for our transgression, by his stripes, or by his bruises in Hebrew, we are healed. Listen to Romans, to what is believed to be one of the earliest confessions of faith by a Christian community: Jesus Christ who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us and you want to say Amen because it sounds like the Apostles' Creed.

Jesus is the only one who could condemn us but instead of condemning us he paid for our life by his blood. Instead of accusing us he intercedes for us. He has chosen to save us, instead of condemning us. Christ is whispering in his father's ear, father forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

The final who that outlines and proves the fact that we are more than conquerors is Who will separate us from the love of Christ. Next week we will see the promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God, but here Paul teases us and gives us a forewarning. Suffice it to say that Paul uses psalm 44 which is a typical lament where the Israelites are wondering where God is. It is a time of hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword and their words are a plea for help.

But here Paul uses the words as proof of victory. Even through these times the people of Israel made it through and I am living proof of it. No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him, Jesus who loved us. We are more than conquerors. We not only win, but we win big. You know, you can win but be decimated at the end of the game. Example of working out on Friday. A victory but you are bruised and battered and sore.

But that is not the image we get here from Paul. He tells us that we are more than conquerors. This image of overabundance from Scripture that must pop to your mind is the feeding of the 5 thousand where Jesus not only fed the people but he had more than they could manage.

We are more than conquerors. Who raises charges? Only God, and God loves us. Who condemns us, only Christ can and he makes us more than conquerors. You may be fairly tapped out today because of a job, or lack of it, because of your family relationships, because of issues of dependencies.

Hear the Good News of the Gospel today. We are more than conquerors, even if it feels like you have been defeated. Amen.