

TEXT: Roman 8:37

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. NIV

My Dear Christian Friends:

“These things,” our text says. It is referring to the things that might **“separate us from the love of Christ”**—things like hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. That’s the list that Paul enumerated, the list of things that we might think could **“separate us from the love of Christ.”** But Paul’s conclusion begins with the triumphant word, **“NO.”** **“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”**

“More than conquerors”? How can we be *more* than conquerors? Ah! That’s the message of the Reformation, the great Good News that God’s Word has to share with us. **“In all these things we are more than conquerors.”** Because, **“we are his people,”** God says in our Jeremiah reading for today. God has sent Someone to watch out for us, to be our Champion, to be the Conqueror for us over sin, death, and devil.

Yet, he doesn’t look like a superhero, does he? He looks like one of us, for that is what he is, born a human being. He looks so weak, so helpless, so vulnerable, so prone to defeat.

He reminds me of David, the young shepherd boy, as he stepped into the valley to face the fearsome giant Goliath. David’s defeat and death seemed certain against such a terrible enemy; it certainly wasn’t a fair fight. But David saw it differently. David knew he had the Mighty God, our Mighty Fortress, on his side. David even said to Goliath, **“You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head” (1 Samuel 17:45-46).** Now that’s what I call trust in our Mighty God, our Mighty Fortress! Goliath was so taken by the looks of David—the shepherd’s staff he carried instead of a spear, and the fact that he was just a youth without the armor of a warrior—that Goliath never noticed until too late the shepherd’s sling and the skill with which young David could handle it.

Remember how that victory was won? A stone, a single stone—a stone moved, and when its deed was done, the victory was assured, David was victorious, and Goliath was beheaded—totally defeated.

Our Champion, Jesus, looked defeated as he was hung on a cross and left to dangle and die in utter humiliation. He was forsaken by God and buried in a

borrowed tomb. But then, another stone—a larger one—moves; the stone is rolled away! And the message begins to sink in, a shout of victory erupts and echoes—through the valley and over the hills, across the plains and down the corridors of time: “The Conqueror, the Savior, returns! Look who is walking back toward us, alive! The victory is won, and it can never be undone! Nothing **“will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39)!**

And **“in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”** How can that be? We didn’t go out and win that great victory. So, how can we be **“more than conquerors”**?

Simply like this: to stay behind, weak, helpless, unable to fight, unable certainly to win, in other words, not trusting in your own good works, your own work-righteousness...to stay behind, safe within the shelter of a mighty fortress...to watch from afar, and to see the victory, won by another, by the Conqueror, the Savior, Jesus Christ...and then to have that Conqueror return and give to you the spoils of victory. Paul describes it this way: **“But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Romans 3:21-22).** These spoils of victory are given to you. You did not earn them. You did not win them. You never could. Yet to you the fruits of victory—being right with God, sins forgiven, eternal life in heaven assured—are given: freely, gladly, joyfully, triumphantly.

This is the message of the day, the message of the Lutheran Reformation, the message of free grace, freely given, gratefully received. As our reading from Romans 3 informs us: **“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:22-25).**

To win the victory is one thing, the thing that only Christ the Conqueror could do for us. To be given the victory, that is something else! **“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”** We are the recipients of his great victory! And we are free, as Jesus told us in our Gospel lesson today, free indeed, to live in forgiveness and grace and faith forever! That glorious truth is yours as an heir of the Lutheran Reformation. So, my friends, **“Come,...take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).** Amen.