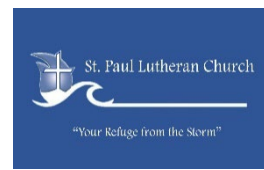


LifeGroup Study



Date: August 13, 2023; Text: Matthew 13:44-45; Romans 8:26-39 Theme: id—A Closer Look at Romans 6-8 Loved...to be more than conquerors

Belong The word conqueror brings to mind historical figures like Alexander the Great or Napoleon, who, through military power, conquered many lands to expand their own power and territory. Webster's defines "conqueror" as "someone who is victorious by force of arms." In the cases of historical conquerors, they eventually lost what they conquered because even though they had the power to achieve their initial goals, they didn't have the lasting power to hold on to what they had gained.

The same thing can be said of us. When we achieve goals, like climb a mountain, we say that we "conquered the mountain" or when we fight the things that scare us we tell ourselves we "conquered our fears." In both cases, either through sheer willpower or strong determination, we achieved what we set out to do. However, the next time we try to climb a mountain or overcome our fears, we may not have the physical or internal strength to conquer them again, leaving us to be like the conquerors of the past by not being able to hold onto what we conquered.

In this week's text, the Apostle Paul teaches how we can conquer the greatest challenge of our lives: life itself. Paul paints a stark contrast to conquest through force by showing how love can drive us beyond being mere conquerors to being something greater. It's hard to imagine how we can be greater than a conqueror or even what that means, but Paul expands our thinking to show it is possible for us to not just conquer life but how we live it here and in eternity through the One who created us.

Prayer... Heavenly Father, we face challenges each day and don't always feel we can overcome them. Our hearts and minds are open to you so that we may learn how we can know and trust the love you have for us so that we may become more than conquerors and live the life you intended for us. Amen.

Believe Read Matthew 13:44-45. Can you imagine something that would be so valuable that you would be willing to sell everything you owned in order to obtain it? In this text, Jesus is speaking to his disciples about the kingdom of heaven.

- *Why do you think Jesus uses an example of a hidden treasure?*
- *What do you think compelled the man to go and sell everything? Do you think it was easy? How do you think that applies to your life? Do you think you could "sell" everything in order to obtain the kingdom of heaven? Share your thoughts.*

Read Romans 8:26-39. In the Matthew text, Jesus is teaching how valuable the kingdom of heaven is and that it is something not only worth pursuing but is obtainable by all. He knows that once we have it, we will experience a transformation within us that is so powerful we will be compelled to live our lives

differently; in a sense, selling off the old us in order to obtain the new.

The Romans text starts out by giving us a sense of comfort about the kingdom of heaven by letting us know that we are not alone and that even if we don't know how to connect to God, the Holy Spirit within us will intercede on our behalf. Paul continues to encourage us by telling us that in all things God works for the good of those who love God, and that if God is for us who can be against us, giving us the impression that if we are on God's side we will be protected and our lives will be insulated from the harsh realities of the world; our lives will always be rich and full.

- *What does it mean that if God is for us who can be against us?*
- *What comes to your mind when you read verse 28?*

However, the text seems to take a different spin on the kingdom of heaven, indicating that even though we have the Holy Spirit within us and we are connected to God, we will face trouble and hardship in our lives which may make us pause to consider the actual value of pursuing the kingdom of heaven. We may wonder why anyone would knowingly pursue something that may cause them to face persecution. What could possibly be so valuable that it is worth the cost? Paul answers that question knowing that our lives at times will be filled with heartache, pain, and hardship but there will also be times when we experience great joy filling us up with a sense of purpose and meaning.

- *What does "that we face death all day long" mean?*
- *How do we find life in the midst of our own pain and suffering?*

Paul assures us that the connection with God through the Holy Spirit is grounded in the deep, abounding love God has for us. It's when we are able to trust that love and grow our love for God and each other that we are able to overcome the most difficult and challenging times. Paul is telling us that the love of God is so powerful that it goes beyond conquering to more than conquering by allowing us to live the life God intended for each of us.

- *What does it mean the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord?*
- *Do you feel God's love? How valuable is that to you?*

Become It can be extremely hard to feel love in the midst of difficult times. It's in those very moments that God is there reaching out to us with love to carry us through and life begins to blossom again. Our ability to love and find compassion grows out of the rubble of the hardship and the foundation of God's unending love brings us a hope that allows us to not just conquer life but to live it to the fullness God has intended.

Prayer... Lord God, we are so grateful for the patience and love you show us each day. We recognize the tender care you give us when we face challenges or are in the midst of great difficulty. Our prayer is not just to survive the tough times but to thrive and give ourselves up to give love and compassion to others as they move through the dark places in their lives. Amen.

Devotionals: Daily Walk on the Rock

Date: August 13, 2023

Text: Matthew 13:44-45; Romans 8:26-39
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Day 1: Monday—Great and Precious Promises

From “no condemnation” to nothing is “able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus,” Romans 8 is resplendent with precious promises. Walk through the chapter, rejoicing in each affirmation of our identity and heritage as those who are in Christ Jesus. Now ponder God’s ineffable holiness, surpassing greatness, and awesome majesty; consider the cost and the sacrifice of our redemption. Do we love and honor God above all else; do we approach God with grateful hearts? Pray the Spirit will make your heart tender as you contemplate God’s love for you. Ask the Lord how you can live into your rich and blessed identity as a child of God.

Day 2: Tuesday—The Spirit Intercedes for Us

Jesus teaches us to pray, “Thy will be done” through instruction and example (*Matthew 6:10; 26:42*), but sometimes, even if we desire God’s will, we are uncertain as to what it is. Even with the counsel of Scripture, we can flounder in knowing how to apply it to our lives. Or we can be so overwhelmed by grief or circumstances, ours or others’, that we are immobilized in our prayers. Silenced by unimaginable suffering, we pray for those whose lives are devastated by cyclones, earthquakes, poverty, war, disease, and more. What comfort and assurances do we find in Romans 8:26-27,34b and Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25? Pour out your heart in prayer.

Day 3: Wednesday—All Things Sometimes we assault those caught in huge heartache with the promise of Romans 8:28. It is a truth we must share with gentleness and in God’s timing. Pray as you read and reflect on 8:28. Note that it does NOT say, “all things are good”! What is the qualifier in the verse? Do you believe that God can do a redemptive work in and through anything? Biblical examples of God’s redemptive work in/through the lives of those who love God include Joseph (*read Genesis 37:19-20,26-28; 45:1-7; 50:15-21*) and Stephen (*read Acts 7:59-8:4*). Do we always see the redemptive miracle this side of eternity? Did Joseph and/or Stephen? Can you think of examples of the fulfillment of Romans 8:28 in your life or in modern history? Thank God for this precious promise. Embrace it.

Day 4: Thursday—Promise and Mystery

Much about God is incomprehensible; we must rest in the mystery of God’s greatness and love, trusting God’s heart and plan. What are the teachings in Romans 8:29-30? Do you struggle with any of these truths? Many do, and countless theologians have debated them. But this is God’s word for us! Pray you will glean insight into the mystery and promise as you read Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33-36; and Ephesians 1:1-14. Ponder these truths in light of God’s truths in John 1:12; 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; and 2 Peter 3:8-9. Can you rest in God’s love and promise, even if you don’t understand? Worship our awesome God, who is beyond our ken.

Day 5: Friday—“He Who Did Not Spare His Own Son”

Do you see God as One who loves you without measure, or do you see God as someone who is just waiting to condemn you? Read all of Romans 8, looking for evidences of God’s yearning love, a love that longs to make us children and heirs. Now reflect on Romans 8:31-34. Read the following passages and choose one or more verses to memorize: Luke 15:3-8; Romans 5:8; Titus 3:4-8a; Hebrews 7:24-27; and 1 John 4:9-10. In Romans 8:33-34a, Paul pictures a court scene; who is the judge, and who bore our guilt, so we could be justified? Worship God.

Day 6: Saturday—More Than Conquerors

Read Psalm 139:1-18 and Romans 8:35-39. What do these passages teach us about the strength and endurance of God’s relentless, undeserved, infinite, unconditional love? Why, how, or in what sense are we more than conquerors? Read Romans 8:35-39 aloud; dwell in this passage until its truths abide in you. Use Tommy Walker’s lyrics to guide your prayer: “He knows my name; He knows my every thought. He sees each tear that falls, and hears me when I call...I have a Maker; He formed my heart. Before even time began, my life was in His hand. I have a Father; He calls me His own. He’ll never leave me, no matter where I go” (1996, *Doulos Pub.*).

Day 7: Sunday—Love and Grace that Transform

Read Romans 8:1-39; 12:1; and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. How will you respond to God’s infinite love and saving grace? What does Jesus say is the appropriate response (*Mark 12:29-31; John 13:34-35; 15:8-13; 21:15-17*). Pray about what this means for you today! Joyfully, walk in the obedience of faith. Sing or pray the familiar lyrics: “I have decided to follow Jesus...No turning back, no turning back” (*original source unknown*).

