

First Sunday in Lent
February 26, 2012
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Romans 8:31-39

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

“You may have won the battle, but I will win the war.” When someone says this, they are saying: “I have been setback. I have lost temporarily. I may even be hurt or wounded, but in the end I will come out on top. I will win. I will be victorious.” While we may use this expression for trivial things such as playing cards, board games, or sports, when it comes to real wars, each battle and especially the final outcome becomes far more serious. We don’t even want to think about what the repercussions would be if our country lost a war to a hostile nation. Today, we focus on the most important war of all, with battles that are intense and furious, and where the results are not just about life and death but about eternal life or death.

The good news is we do not have to be afraid for God tells us the outcome. We will not only win, but we are more than conquerors. Literally, the words in our text call us “super-conquerors.” We are more than conquerors in the most important war because our Lord wins for us by defeating sin, death, and the devil through His Son. Not only that, He is also there to help us come out victorious in our every battle in life. Take tremendous comfort in the Lord’s message this morning. **We are more than Conquerors through the Lord who loves us!**

Paul makes a couple of important points in the verses right before the words of our text. First, Paul penned God’s precious promise which God’s children so often turn to in times of trouble. **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those that love him.”** Secondly, Paul writes the mind boggling truth that God’s people are foreknown, predestined, justified, and glorified. God, in His infinite wisdom, sees every step of His children’s salvation completed, even before they are born. God knew that little Owen Hammons, way before Jeremy and Brittney were even born, would become one of God’s children today through baptism.

Now Paul goes on asking: **“What shall we say in response to all this? If God is for us, who can be against us?”** Since we have a God who knows everything, a God who, beyond our comprehension, knew us by name before we were born and planned out our eternal salvation, a God whose almighty power and love controls all to work out for our good, it’s pretty easy to

answer Paul's question, isn't it? Since this God is for us no one can defeat us! Nothing or no one will be able to stand against us who have the all-powerful, all-wise, all-knowing Creator and Controller of all things on our side. As confident as we may be in our U.S military defending us that can't begin to compare to the confidence we can have in our Almighty God.

The greatest part of being on God's side is He loves us. He does not want to pour out His wrath on us because of our sins. So in His love and justice, He poured out His wrath upon His own Son. ***“He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all.”*** As we follow Jesus this Lent to His Good Friday cross, we see how God did just that! We see how He did not spare His innocent Son from the mockery, from the ridicule, or from the pain. We see God gave Jesus up to suffer the very hell our sins deserve. We watch Jesus die to save us.

Now Paul asks: ***“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?”*** Certainly, there are many who try. The world makes accusations that Christians are intolerant and extremists if we speak out against certain choices or lifestyles. The world calls God's people a bunch of hypocrites saying we are no better than anyone else, and often our sinfulness makes them look right. Our own sinful nature that clings to us tells us we deserve punishment no matter what God says about grace. Satan too, after He tempts us to sin, switches to the accuser role and tells us: *“Look what you have done! You are guilty! How can God love you or ever forgive you for a sin like that?”*

Despite all those who try, despite all the charges thrown our way the answer to the question of who can bring any charge against us is obvious. No one! For: ***“It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us?”*** God has already declared us not guilty in His sight because of His Son. Who condemns? Jesus will be the judge that all will stand before on the last day. Jesus, your Savior who died for you, more than that your Savior who came out of the grave to remove any doubt that He won eternal life for you now sits at the right hand of God (a position of all power) interceding for you.

Isn't that comforting? When Satan points to a certain sin and says “guilty”, Jesus steps in saying: *“I see no sin because my blood has washed it away. Not guilty!”* When our sinful heart and sinful deeds makes us feel like we dare not approach God, Jesus encourages: *“Come before God as a child approaches his own dear dad in all freedom & confidence for at your baptism you are clothed in my righteousness and your sins no longer separate you from God.”* While God's law shouts ***“the wages of sin is death”***, Jesus speaks again the Gospel ***“but the gift of God is life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord”*** (Romans 6).

The victory is ours! We are more than conquerors! My prayer is these words cause us to pause to consider the love it took to do this – to give us the victory. One of the privileges I have as a pastor is to go to the hospital and visit parents who have just been blessed with a new baby. I was able to do that once again this last Wednesday. It is cool thing to see the excitement, the joy, and especially the love in the eyes of proud parents. I've never asked any parents this question, but I think I know what the response would be if I asked them to give up their son. What if God asked for that child back? Maybe it doesn't have to be something as precious to us as our children. What if God asked for some time, some friend, some money, some popularity, out of love and loyalty to His Word, would you do it? Would you give those up gladly and willingly? If God would ask you now to give up house and home, wealth and position, all that you are and have, would you do it? I don't think I would have done as well as Abraham when

tested. I really love my kids. In fact, I am ashamed to admit how little God gets from me when I compare it to what He gives. If we do not love God enough to give up our son for Him, why should He give up His Son for us?

Yet, that is what God has done for you, for me. He gave up Jesus to save me even from my sins of selfishness, my sins against God's very first commandment. And Paul asks us, after seeing that awesome love that gave up His Son, ***"How will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"*** Having given His Son, and having performed the miracle of giving us faith to believe it, how could we ever again doubt His love? Paul then asks: ***"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"*** The obvious answer: No one or nothing can take us from His love. Paul writes a list: ***"Shall trouble or hardship, or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"***

Notice Paul never promises God's people a heaven on earth. In fact, he quotes from the Psalms to the contrary: ***"For your sake we face death all day long: we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."*** As sinners in a sinful world we will face troubles, hardships and persecution. Christians may even face danger or the sword. But the love of God in Christ holds us tightly through every struggle. God works every one of our troubles for our good. He puts our faith through a refiner's fire. The Lord promises to give us the strength to endure every trial. The Lord will never leave us, not even in death. So come death, come angels or demons! Let the past haunt us and the present scare us and the future terrify us! It is all nothing; the love of God in Christ leaves us at peace and secure. Lent proves that love as nothing else could.

There is absolutely nothing that can separate from such love that gives sinners like us the victory! We have won the war in Christ and with God on our side: how can we lose a single battle? We are more than conquerors through the Lord who loves us. We have eternal life because He so loved the world that He gave up His Son. Walk away from God's Word today comforted and confident that ***"neither life nor death, neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** Amen.