

Conquering Challenges

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

In our life's journey, we face everyday hardships, tribulations, and trials. How then can we be victorious in the midst of all these hardships and trials? St. Paul answers this question in *Romans 8:37*, “*we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*” It is our faith in God that gives us victory. “*So then faith comes by hearing.*” (*Romans 10:17*) Hearing the word of God and His promises will establish and strengthen your faith, “*we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*” (*Romans 8:37*) God has made four promises to us. Recalling these promises will serve to strengthen our faith and lead us to be victorious through Jesus Christ who loved us. These four promises are found in St. Paul's letter to the Romans (*Romans 8*).

The **first promise** is “*we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.*” (*Romans*

8:28) St. Paul assures us that ***ALL*** things, ***NOT most*** things, ***NOT*** often, but ***ALL*** things will work together for good. Even the evil that is inflicted upon us by others, or by Satan himself, God will turn it into good for those who love Him. We know how Joseph's brothers tried to destroy him and sold him as a slave. Although his brothers intended to harm him, God intended it for good. Even evil intentions, God converted into blessings and goodness for Joseph.

St. Paul had a disease in his eyes that made his vision weak and produced secretions that may have been offensive. St. Paul states in his letter to the Galatians, “*And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.*” (*Galatians 4:14-15*) He understood

that his eye disease was not from God, but an attack from Satan to hinder his service. Because of this ailment, he could not travel alone but needed to have companions to help him. He also worried that people may be offended by the discharge from his eyes. St. Paul also loved to read, but was not able to read or write as he wanted to. He prayed for the ministry and three times asked God to heal him. “*Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*” (*2 Corinthians 12:8*) To his surprise, God told him no, He would not heal him! Many times when we pray and God answers our prayers with a ‘*No*,’ we think He did not listen or answer our prayers. God answers our prayers either by *Yes* or by *No* because He knows what is best for us. The Lord confirmed that although St. Paul's infirmity was from Satan, He would make his illness work out for good. It appears that the Lord was protecting St. Paul from pride. Since St. Paul saw many revelations and visions he would be

susceptible to becoming exalted. This weakness would protect St. Paul's humbleness and save him from the sin of pride.

God wanted to teach St. Paul another lesson, to have faith in the grace of God and to place his trust and confidence in God not in his own abilities. “*My grace is sufficient for you.*” (*2 Corinthians 12:9*) Cannot God's grace work in weakness? Do we need to be healthy for God's grace to work for us? NO! “*My grace is sufficient.*” Actually the Lord says, “*My strength is made perfect in weakness.*” (*2 Corinthians 12:9*) When we are strong, we trust in our own abilities and are self-confident. We do not go to God for help, and thus we fail. If we realize our weaknesses, then we will put our trust in God. This will give the strength of God the opportunity to be manifested and to work at its fullest in my life. St. Paul understood that God is able to turn his weakness and hardship into victory, “*we are more*

than conquerors through Him who loved us.” (*Romans 8:37*) With weak eyes, St. Paul wrote more than one half of the New Testament. “*Therefore, most gladly, I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*” (*2 Corinthians 12:9-10*)

The **second promise** that we need to remember is that God invested His blood in us! The Lord Jesus Christ did not invest gold or silver in us, He invested His blood. Do you think that after God purchased us with His blood, He would make us fail? “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” (*Romans 8:31*) God is for us because He made us and purchased us. We are His children.

When the army of Aram went to attack Elisha the prophet, his disciple Gehazi was afraid, but Elisha's faith

was strong. He didn't lose heart when he saw an army fighting him. Elisha knew that God would make him victorious. Can you imagine a single person along with one disciple fighting an army? Gehazi started to lose hope. Elisha prayed for him and asked God to open his eyes so that he could see God's invisible army of heavenly hosts. (2 Kings 6:16-18) *"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them."* (Psalm 34:7) God opened Gehazi's eyes. He saw thousands of angels surrounding them and their number outnumbered the army of Aram. Gehazi realized that those who are with them were more than those who were against them.

We should not lose hope or feel defeated. We know that God is for us. He purchased us. David was not afraid of Saul. He told Saul that he could only kill him if God allowed it. Our lives are in the hands of God. If God allowed hardships to come upon us, like what happened with Job, we must trust *"that all things work together for good."* (Romans 8:28) If God did not give permission that we be hurt, nobody could harm us. When St. Paul was imprisoned, there were rumors that Nero would soon order his execution. St. Paul did not lose heart because he knew that his life was in God's hands, not in the hands of Nero. *"I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as*

always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." (Philippians 1:19-20). Whether God allowed him to be delivered from prison into the world or to be delivered from prison into heaven, God will be glorified in him, whether by life or by death. St. Paul was not afraid of death.

Death is not an enemy to us because Christ, in His resurrection, abolished the power of death. Before the resurrection, we were afraid of death; we were in bondage. After Christ's resurrection, death actually became life, a bridge to heaven. *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:21) In the lives of the children of God, death is a celebration.

God purchased us because He LOVED us! One of the church fathers said, *"the love of God is the nail that nailed Him to the cross. It is not the Jews; it is not the betrayal of Judas. It is the love of Christ. His love nailed Him on the cross to save us."* Do you know how much God loves us? St. Paul reveals the answer in God's **third promise** to us. *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."* (Romans 8:32) What is more precious for God the Father than His own Son? Absolutely nothing! To that extent, He loved us. If He gave us His Son, then with His Son He will give us anything else freely.

Our victory is not because we are worthy, or strong, or powerful. It is

because He loved us. *GOD is LOVE!* His love is unconditional. He shed His blood for sinners who rejected Him, *"while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8) He prayed for them, *"Father forgive them."* (Luke 23:34) In His love, we are victorious. St. Paul went through a similar experience, *"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead."* (2 Corinthians 1:8-9) Christ is the hope of the hopeless and the help of the helpless. If I am dead, Christ is the resurrection, life, and truth. We need to remember God's love and put our confidence in Him, *"who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will deliver us."* (2 Corinthians 1:10)

This brings us to the **last promise**. In order to strengthen our faith and be victorious through our faith in Christ, we need to remember that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. In other words, nothing will make Christ cease to love us. *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"* (Romans 8:35) Nothing! Not tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword! Friends may leave me during times of tribulation. Relatives may forsake me during times of persecution. My beloved may stay away from me during times of distress. But Christ, NEVER!

NEVER! St. Paul said, *"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:38-39)

"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." (Romans 8:33) Do you think Satan will dare to bring charges against us? We are God's elect. Satan cannot complain against us because the penalty is paid. Who is the judge? My Father! The Judge is also my Lawyer. He is the one who died for me to defend me. *"Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercessions for us."* (Romans 8:34) What is He expecting from me? He only expects me to live for Him in gratefulness and appreciation for all that He has done. *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* Galatians 2:20

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39) St. Paul affirms in all hardships, tribulations, trials, in ALL, not in most, not in 90%, but in ALL things, *"we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."* (Romans 8:37) Our victory is through His love.

Promise One

"All things work together for good to those who love God." (Romans 8:28)

1

Promise Two

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

2

Promise Three

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

3

Promise Four

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35)

4

If we keep in our minds and in our hearts these four promises, then regardless of the hardships that we face every day, we can say with St. Paul, *"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."* (Romans 8:37)

Glory be to God forever. Amen.