

# “CONQUERORS...?”

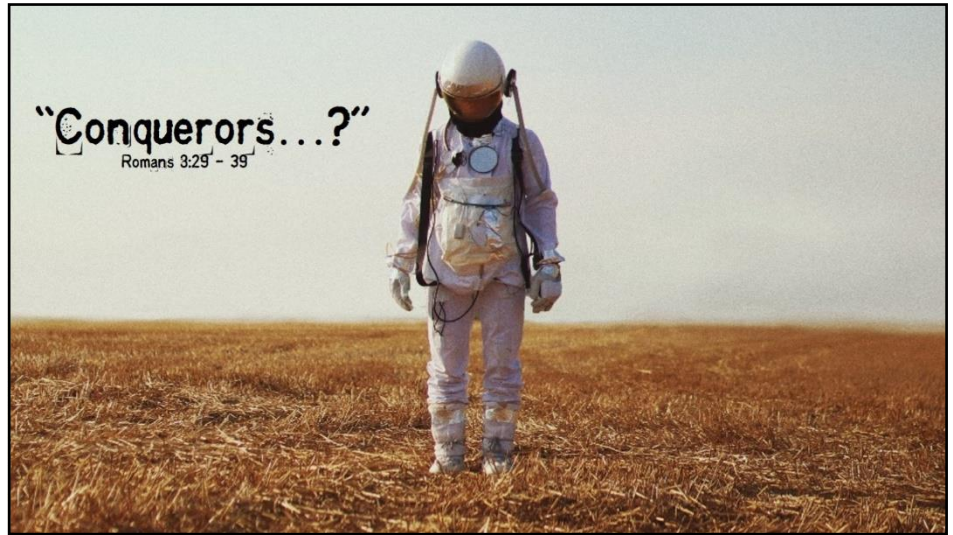
- Romans 8:29-39

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
at JF Believers Church  
in Menomonie, Wisc  
on March 1, 2020

**Romans 8:29 - 39** *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30*

*Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He*

*also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 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? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 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 intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 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.*



In 1519, Hernán Cortés led a large expedition consisting of 600 Spaniards, 16 or so horses, and 11 boats to Mexico. The goal: capture a magnificent treasure said to be held there. Upon arrival, Cortés made history by destroying his ships. This sent a clear message to his men: **There is no turning back.** They either win or they perish. Although you might assume that Cortés' men would have become despondent, with no exit strategy in place to save their lives, they instead rallied behind their leader as never before. Within two years, he succeeded in his conquest of the Aztec empire. This story has effectively played out on the pages of Romans...reaching a crescendo in chapter 8.

Chapter 8 of Romans has been a roller coaster account, alternating between grace-filled peaks and agonizing desperate valleys. We were challenged as to whether we were indeed still living in the flesh. Whether we were “walking according to the flesh” or “walking according to the Spirit.” Whether we are carnally minded or spiritually minded. We learned about the necessity of the “spirit of life”...how the Holy Spirit was so very necessary to our successful walk in Christ while we are still on this earth. Verse 13 even told us told us that “...if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” We read not only about our shortcomings and our possible shortcomings, but then we read about suffering with Christ and the necessity to share in that aspect with Christ. We read of the fallen state of man and the world at large...about our eventual desire to finally and ultimately be redeemed bodily and well as in soul and spirit.

Then there was so many “if’s” in this chapter: “**IF** the Spirit of God dwells in you” ... **IF** anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His...**IF** Christ is in you... **IF** the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you... **if** you live according to the flesh you will die... **if** children, then heirs of God... **if** indeed we suffer with Him...**if** we hope for what we do not see.

Now we have verse 31 having the audacity to say to us “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” ...**oh, I don't know...maybe ME?**” Arriving here at the end of Romans 8, despite it's elements of good news...the ‘high water marks’ of this chapter, it's hard hear all the rest of it and to not feel convicted and defeated.

It's so easy to get lost in the quandary of what we have read, and then fail to catch the important issues that Paul was leading up to. Paul, seeming to instinctively realize that his readers could easily be circling the drain at this point throws

on the brakes by asking that question: “*what then shall we say to these things?*” Sort of... “*well...what do you all think?*”

Paul was saying herein, that if God did indeed foreknow us...knew what we were going to become even here today...and He went ahead, *in advance*, and set things in motion to conform us into the image of His Son. Then He called us to his mission even in our messed up state, declared us “justified”...*just-as-if-I’d* hadn’t sinned, and then began working us into his image in practice, and never gave up on us...even now still making us pleasing to God. If all that is a fact, Paul was saying “*who can be against us?*”

**Verse 29: For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

Please note that the word here is “*whom*” not “*what*.” It’s “*whom* He knew before.” We all seem to be able to grasp God’s ability to see and know our future, but we often forget His primary focus. His driving passion is *us!* He is not a CEO trying to get good stock dividends out of His company. He is a loving Creator, trying to have a relationship with His creation. When did He come to know us? When we were yet unborn. When did He call us? Long before we knew it...long before we heard His voice. For as God told Jeremiah, “*I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart...*” Jer 1:5. ...and with Isaiah: “*The LORD called me before my birth; from within the womb he called me by name.*” (Isa 49:1) And with Paul: “*For it pleased God in his kindness to choose me and call me, even before I was born! What undeserved mercy!*” (Gal 1:15) And according to scripture we must acknowledge that God not only pre-knew, but He even pre-caused the events of our lives. Events that if we let Him lead us through, will fill and fulfill our lives and being. Events that provide the path for our continual sanctification. (Note “*to be conformed into the image of the Son.*”).

Without getting lost in the subject of Calvinism and a long detailed development of the doctrine of “predestination,” let’s just simply acknowledge that while God knows who is coming to Him, He excludes no one. He refuses no one. “*...for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men...*” (Tit 2:11) For those of us who *will* come, God saw seen it long before we arrived here! And having done so, He set into motion a personal series of events that promise to transform us into the “image” or the “reflection” of His Son, Jesus. Look, we *will* become like the God in our life! The only question really is just *who* or *what* is your God?

We can gather information via the very attributes of God to understand at least some of His methodology and thus to shed light on His plans for us. Scriptural “predestination” means ‘*to foreordain, to decide beforehand.*’ Some will claim in the reformed camps of the greater church that God designated some to come to Him and be redeemed while excluding others from that option. There are many counters to that popular position, one of which is here in this passage: *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all...*” (Verse 32) And further, the idea is presented by these folks that if you are so chosen in this cosmic lottery, you do not really even have a choice to reject His offer, but rather you are compelled to come. (This reformed doctrine is called “Irresistible Grace.”)

But if God *compelled* those who come to come to Him, then why would He only “call” the same to ministry? The word “call” here means “invite.” Doesn’t the very nature of “calling” here therefore denote the possibility...the *option*, to not answer that call? No...Jesus died for all, but we must respond to that call to capitalize on its benefits. Therefore it is as has been said, that Jesus sends no one to hell. He just merely ‘confirms reservations.’ The reality is, we send *ourselves* to hell by rejecting the gospel and payment Jesus has made on our behalf. And we can just as easily reject the ‘call’ to ministry that is being made towards us. All of that being said, while we can reject His salvation and reject His call to ministry, God indeed sees and knows the future. He know what we are going to do. That doesn’t stop Him from calling, but perhaps such is given only to condemn us by our own personal rejection?

We therefore must find it an impossibility that God would *not* know who is coming to Him and who is not, despite how uncomfortable that might make us feel or the questions that may arise in our hearts and minds because of such a truth. Our God is omniscient. He knows everything ...*actual and possible*. Now what we *do* with this factual information is what becomes dangerous and confusing! Because we forget that God is operating in a timeless realm and when we ponder His methods and further make doctrinal positions based on our existence in a linear time frame, everything falls apart. Isaiah

55:8 tells us clearly “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, ’ says the LORD.*” But ironically, that has never stopped us from trying!

Such emphatic doctrinal positions immediately run afoul in light of the whole of Scripture. For to stand on the belief that this passage means God is the sole player and that He chooses some and damns others, would negate vast segments of Scripture, not to mention relegating Him into the category of a monster who made some people to be only human fodder for hell! The scriptures are literally overflowing with passages that call man to *choose*, to personally *move*, to *spread the gospel*, the call to missions, etc. All of such would be null and void...moreover even useless, if God chooses some to salvation and others to hell’s damnation! God does *know*. But to *know* is not the same thing as to *mandate*. God acts in knowledge, but doesn’t force us to come or not come. Scripture clearly teaches about our *free-will*.

So interpreting Scripture *in light of Scripture*, we find that God saw it all and *sees it all*. He moved and moves yet even now in that evidence, and calls out for our participation which therefore obviously plays into the final outcome. Thus He sees the end, and now calls us to come. John 6:44 “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...*” And that is what God is doing for all of us...proven by the sacrifice of His Son on the cross, He is drawing “all men” unto Him! Titus 2:11 says “For the grace of God that brings salvation *has appeared to all men...*” Joel 2:32 says “*And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved...*” And Revelation 22:17 “*...let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely...*” Who are these “elect” individuals that the bible speaks of? The “elect” are the “*whosoever will,*” and the “non-elect” are the “*whosoever won’t...*”

**8:32 - “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?”**

The whole matter is settled right here. The “great Calvinistic debate” that has kept theologians occupied for ages should come to rest on verse 32 of chapter eight! God “delivered (Jesus) up **for us all.**” It’s the proverbial “bottom line”: *God gave up His own Son to die for man’s sin, and he died for us ALL.*

Now I feel I must pause for a moment here to show you something very important and to stress why we all should be as the Bereans in Acts 17... “*And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.*” It’s easy these days to surf the web and get a plethora of easily believable and professionally presented information. (\* Note attached screenshot). In the Calvinist position of “Limited Atonement” they take the position that Christ died and paid for the sins of just those who are reborn: we read in the attached “(It is a) ‘*DISTORTION of this biblical truth is that Christ died for all men. Some teach that Christ made it possible for all men to be saved...it must not be said that Christ died for all men.*” Yet the apostle Paul, the apostle John and Jesus Christ Himself begs to differ: Paul of course spoke clearly here to the contrary and in 1Timothy 2:3-6, “*This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*” The apostle John in 1 John 2:2 - *He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins — and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.* And then Jesus says in John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*” So be careful Christian. There are people who may actually have good intentions but will lead you astray if you are not a diligent student of the Word!

So if this is true ...if “*God is for us, (who can be against us? who can be against us?)...and He ... did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, ...then how can we doubt? Won’t He “freely give us all things?”* Things like salvation, redemption, His love and His peace, not to mention eternal and abundant life? On the basis of this passage (not to mention the truckload of other Scriptures), we can conclude clearly that no one is excluded by God! If we fail to receive all these things listed, it’s because we have refused them!

**8:33-34 - Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 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 intercession for us.**

Paul brings us back to the reason he even brought up this issue...really the whole of the Book of Romans, in the first place. Paul was in effect saying “bring it on!” We’ll take that fight because we refuse to be in bondage. “*Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one — for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one — for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love?*” (NLT)

Paul is saying...in light of the cross...who can charge us? Ah! But so many have tried! How many have come on the scene since then, trying to add to our guilt? But our guilt is gone in Christ! First it was the Pharisees with the mandating of their “laws and rituals.” Then all the gangs of denominational legalists that have followed a plethora of unhappy religious masochists, who try as they might, to drag others into their pit. “Misery loves company” it seems! It’s GOD who has justified us. We didn’t just get a big stick to fight these guys off. We’ve got GOD. Romans tells us that Christ is right up close to the Judge here. Our Lord is standin’ beside God Himself and taking care of us. Our needs and our issues daily, moment by moment!

NOTE: Our triune God is again gracing our pages of Scripture! Vs 26 - the Spirit makes intercession. Vs 31- God is for us Vs 34- Jesus makes intercession...

**8:35-36 *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."***

Again, Paul is so emphatic! Who can bust up this relationship we have with God? No one. If death can’t separate us from Him, what on this earth would be able to? Paul lays out a list of the stuff that brings mankind to its knees. The kind of stuff that can break the strongest man! Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword? A list of issues that would make any of us doubt our standing with our heavenly Father. Please note that Paul makes no attempt to sugarcoat the Christian walk. He doesn’t claim that you’ll never be sick or never be broke. He left that to the televangelists that would follow in a few years.

**8:37 *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.***

The wording in the original means “super-conquerors!” That’s a great word! Through Him we do not just survive, we thrive! Despite our falling short...despite of errors, we do not merely squeak into heaven, but we are welcomed in with open arms. But the answer is not within our own strength and it’s not an issue of Him making you stronger in an “inner-strength” sort of way. It is through Him that we are conquerors, and through Him that we are strong!

But this position is never meant to be the end of the story. Many of us are just happy to defend ourselves against the attacks of Satan, but God wants to move us spiritually in the offense also. In Christ we are “all in”...we have burned our ships and our victory is not only sure, but necessary! For there is now no place to go back to. What have you to lose Christian? Let the truth of this promise sink deep into your soul. In a world where little, if anything is guaranteed, God is promising. No quantity of sin will stop Him. Nothing I can say or do will stop His love from being poured out to me. Notice that Paul wasn’t just passing on a verbal promise from the Lord...though that would have been wonderful even in that form. Paul was saying “he was persuaded.” You see, Paul had been through all these things personally! And even *experientially* Paul had found these promises of God to be true!

It seems that we can read the promises of God a thousand times, but unless we experience those promises for ourselves, they never become as real as they are here for Paul. That’s why so many folks never embrace such promises in their lives! It is because those promises never leave the pages of Scripture to become a real part of their life experience. Are **you** persuaded?

Can you say it today? Can you mean it? “*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...separate **me**,... from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”



is ordained to eternal life. Read carefully [John 10:26](#) for another plain "horse before the cart" passage. Can one imagine what the *denial* of this doctrine would mean? If we remember that before we are saved, we can *do nothing good* ([John 15:5](#); [Ephesians 2:1-6](#)), the only conclusion is that we could never choose God. And never would. And never would be saved.

But God is sovereign and chooses whom He will choose. And after He chooses us, we choose Him daily. All we are and all we have is given us by God.

Again, this is the faith that we preach, because it is Biblical, because it is the faith of our fathers, living still in our hearts, and because it gives God all the glory!!!!

## For All Men?

Is the faith of our fathers living in your life? In your church? We sing the song: "Faith of our fathers living still..." and no doubt the faith *is* living. But the question is, "*Where* is that faith living and confessed?" And, "*What* is the faith of our fathers?" It was expressed over 350 years ago by our church fathers at the Synod of Dordt (in the Netherlands). We use the familiar acronym: TULIP to help us remember what our fathers said the Bible teaches:

### L - Limited Atonement

The great gospel message that so many today are urgently carrying to distant lands is that *Christ made atonement with His death*. But there are two critical points at which this message is so severely distorted that it no longer carries the gospel message.

THE FIRST DISTORTION concerns what Christ's death *did*. The Biblical truth of the *Atonement* is that His death *paid for sins*. Yet so many today teach that Christ's death was only an example for us to follow, and if one merely follows His example he will be saved. Or it is taught that Christ's death did not actually pay for any specific sins, but made it *possible* for all sins to be paid for.

But the Bible says that Christ's death on the cross actually paid for sins. [Acts 20:28](#) says that God bought the church with His own blood. See also [Matthew 26:28](#), [Hebrews 7:26-27](#).

THE SECOND DISTORTION of this biblical truth is that Christ died for all men. Some teach that Christ made it possible for all men to be saved. But the questions that must be asked are: "If Christ died for all men, why are not all men saved?" "Can not God do what He desires to do?" "Is there something defective in Christ's death?" "Must man desire to be saved first?" But a man who is totally depraved can not will to be saved. He hates God and wants nothing to do with Christ's death. So it must not be said that Christ died for all men.

The Bible says that Christ laid down His life for His sheep, and only them. [John 10:11](#). The *ATONEMENT* is *LIMITED* to the elect of God. Every sin of every one of Christ's sheep is paid for. Those sins and those alone have been paid for. That is the only gospel because that is the Bible.

## Dragged Kicking & Screaming to Heaven?

Is the faith of our fathers living in your life? In your church? We sing the song: "Faith of our fathers living still..." and no doubt the faith *is* living. But the question is, "*Where* is that faith living and confessed?" And, "*What* is the faith of our fathers?" It was expressed over 350 years ago by our church fathers at the Synod of Dordt (in the Netherlands). We use the familiar acronym: **TULIP** to help us remember what our fathers said the Bible teaches:

### I - Irresistible Grace

The fourth Biblical truth in the five points of Calvinism teaches that *God's grace to save a person cannot be resisted*. Grace is God's *free and unmerited power* to save a person from his sins which would otherwise lead us to hell. Grace brings him to heaven who naturally would end in eternal hell.