

New Year's Eve
December 31, 2021

"God's convincing answer to all our "who?" questions!" (Romans 8:31-39)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Today’s text for this New Year’s Eve service is from our Epistle reading – Romans 8:37.

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Here ends our text.

This is a great epistle text for a New Year’s service. For as we look back on the year, each of us can fill in the blank and describe “all these things” that have tested our faith. Each year is different and maybe 2021 was more difficult than past years.

There is, however, an important word that starts this comforting text. It’s the word “yet”. Whatever you endured or whatever was thrown at you, it all is contrasted by this strong little word “yet”. Sometimes it’s translated “never the less” or “but” or “on the other hand”.

“All these things” of 2021 were most definitely real, but, never the less, they don’t negate what is also real and greater – that, “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!”

Did you feel like a conqueror in 2021? You were! For you stood strong in the faith in the face of many threats and tests. And not only does Paul tell you that you are a conqueror, he doesn’t want to leave any doubt in your mind. God’s word says that you are “more” than conquerors! We have complete victory! We have an overwhelming victory!

And there is one more phrase in our text, the most important phrase. For this victory wasn’t something that you or I actually achieved, nor could we. The “conquered” more accurately describes us. We are conquered with loneliness, pain, anxiety, fear, doubt, unhappiness. Yet, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, “through Him who loved us”!

We, the unlovable, complaining, distressed people of 2021 were continually loved by Jesus so that we would not be overtaken by “all these things”. Jesus loved you and me by feeding us as a Good Shepherd with His word and His very body and blood for our forgiveness.

Jesus is the “who’s who” of our lives - the most important person in our lives. He is the “who” who loved you when others didn’t. He is the “who” who never let you down. He is the “who” who gave His life on the cross and rose again to make you a conqueror of sin, death and the devil!

There are a lot of “who’s” that are against us. And Paul takes the time in chapter 8 to describe them.

First, Paul asks, “Who can be against us?” Well, there are a lot of people that are against us. There are people who are constantly trying to cause disruption and harm by hacking into our accounts or social media, etc. to hurt our reputation or finances. I saw an advertisement on TV the other day of a company that offers protection against those who are trying to steal your home title. Home lock or Life lock was the name of the company.

There are “who’s” who are trying to teach our children unchristian things and use your tax dollars for unchristian things. But against this backdrop, what does Paul say in verse 31?

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” Yes, the almighty God is for you and no one can stand against God! How do you know God is for you? Paul goes on to make sure you have no doubts.

“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?”

No cost was spared to put you on God’s side. The Father delivered up His Son for your salvation. So said Simeon on Sunday.

“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,” (Luke 2:29-30)

God has given you the greatest gift, fellowship with the Triune God, eternal glory with Him. He’s for you! He won’t let you down in 2021 or 2022 or ever!

What does God freely offer? Ah... let's continue to hear how God negates all who are against us.

“Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?” God calls you His elect, His beloved, His holy people! Who could possibly bring a charge against someone whom God calls holy? These are rhetorical questions. For the answer is always no one can!

Paul declares, **“It is God who justifies.”** You have been justified through faith. And there is no one, not the devil, nor anyone who can charge you for your sins. For they have been forgiven in Christ. Your sins of 2021 have been forgiven and every year of year life and your years to come!

And if this is so, Paul then asks the next rhetorical question, **“Who is he who condemns?”**

There is no charge and therefore no condemnation! For Christ was charged and condemned in our stead. That's what Paul goes on to tell us is the reason that no one can condemn us. **“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.”**

Jesus makes sure that no charge comes to the Father for He sits at the Father's right hand and intercedes for us!

Let's go on to another rhetorical question then!

“35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”

Yes, there is always a “who” behind a persecution. The coronavirus originated in China. And there was a “who” who caused such distress on the world. There is “who” who has caused a famine in the chain of supply. There is a “who” who has caused terrorism in our land and seeks to do so again and again.

Paul describes you and me as he quotes Psalm 44:22 **“For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”**

Christ's life had no value to the Romans who executed Him, nor do our lives as His followers.

Can any of these perils separate us from the love of Christ? Again, the answer is a resounding no! And so, we joyfully repeat our text one more time.

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

In the world’s eyes, a Christian has no worth other than to be exploited, downtrodden, and harmed. Yet, God sees His people differently. When He sees you, He sees more than a conqueror. For your victory is overwhelmingly complete in Jesus who love you!

There’s a story that was shared with me today about a farmer who was asked to give a blessing for a breakfast. He began by saying, “Lord, I don’t like buttermilk and I don’t like lard, and I don’t care much for raw white flour.” Everyone was wondering where this prayer was going and was feeling a little uncomfortable. “But, Lord, when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits”.

When things come up in our lives that we don’t like, when life gets hard, and we don’t understand why things happened the way they did in 2021, then we pray that God would remind us of our text,

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

For God mixes all the “who’s” that are against us and all the tribulation we face and serves us a “warm fresh biscuit” of His love in Christ.

Yes, two verses before our text, Paul also said, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”**

So, we enter 2022 with this confidence that God is with us. What peace and joy that gives us! And even more, that as conquerors, are eternal glory also is coming soon! So Paul can say in this same chapter of Romans 8, **“that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”** Blessed New Year in Jesus! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)