Harry Horton and B. G. Burkett were roommates at Ft. Hood, Texas. Several times Harry told his friend that somehow he knew he was going to be killed in Viet Nam. One night, Burkett asked him why he had volunteered for the Army if he thought he was going to die. Horton told him simply, “Because America needs me!”

A month after Lt Horton left for Viet Nam, Burkett sent him a Christmas card that came back marked “Deceased.” Burkett eventually learned that Harry had become a rifle platoon leader with the 25th Infantry Division, and during a battle had been pinned down with his platoon by an enemy machine gun. Not wanting to send any of his men on such a dangerous mission, Harry charged the enemy position, eliminating it with a hand grenade. Unfortunately, Harry was mortally wounded. He was 22 years of age.

Burkett later wrote these words about his friend, “Horton did his duty to America without flinching. Harry wasn’t an intellectual, nor was he particularly athletic or even very handsome. He was simply the heart, soul, and backbone of America. In times of crisis, it isn’t the politicians or generals who save us. It’s the Harry Horton’s. America didn’t even notice the passing of Harry Horton, but she is substantially poorer in his absence.”

I’m not sure of 2 Lt Harry Horton’s standing with God. But, if he was a believer in Jesus Christ, two things are true of him in light of today’s passage of Scripture. Harry was 1) more than a conqueror in Christ, and 2) his heroic death could not separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus. On Memorial Day weekend 2020, we remember you 2Lt Harry Horton with heartfelt gratitude.

Well, I hadn’t originally planned to spend 10 consecutive Sundays working through the New Testament Book of Romans, Chapter 8, but here we are at the 10th and final sermon from this incredible chapter. This is also the 10th Sunday of the pandemic lockdown, so every one of the Sundays we’ve been isolating we’ve been in Romans 8.

The final 5 verses are before us today, Romans 8:35-39. The theme of this chapter is the believer’s eternal security in Jesus Christ. I often read portions of Romans 8 with grieving families, especially some combination of verses 28-39. If their deceased loved one possessed saving faith in Jesus Christ, these verses remind them that nothing whatsoever could separate their believing loved one from his/her Lord and Savior.

Romans 8:35-39:

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

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.”

Verses 35 and 39 are bookends of each other. In verse 35, the Apostle Paul, this letter’s author, mentions “the love of Christ.” Then, in verse 39 at the other end of the passage, Paul makes mention of “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

As we look back, briefly, to the four verses we examined last Sunday morning (Romans 8:31-34), we remember Paul asked five rhetorical questions in making his assertions. Paul stressed that if God is for us, and He will give us all things, no one can make a charge against nor condemn God’s people. With verse 35 in today’s passage, we see that Paul asks two more questions, which are essentially the same question with the second question listing factors that could not come between God and His children.

In verse 35, Paul asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Well, how would you answer that? No one! To prove this assertion, Paul then lists 7 different circumstances that could come between the Christian and the love of Jesus.

- **Tribulation** – also means affliction, such as being abused as a child, losing a job, being deprived of access to family members and loved ones, severe illness.
- **Distress** – internal hardship, emotional turmoil; the feeling of being between a rock and a hard place.
- **Persecution** – being pursued by someone intent on harming you. Being shunned by those who are sophisticated; passed over for some honor or promotion or not being included.
- **Famine** – hunger; how long until the lack of food disrupts your life? Panic realized with the lack of meat in grocery stores; disrupted supply chain due to the coronavirus.
- **Nakedness** – could refer to economic hardship as a result of natural disasters or war (think of the refugee crisis). Clothing can be hard to come by when all you have is what you’re wearing.
- **Peril** – dangers that Christians are exposed to simply because they are Christians. Being arrested and jailed or imprisoned; attacked and beaten.
- **Sword** – means execution. Many Christians are murdered for their faith in Jesus. Martyrdom. Paul’s quote in verse 36 comes from Psalm 44:22 and it reminds us that in all times believers in Jesus have had it tough.

None of these shall come between the Christian and God!

That brings us to a verse I’ve always drawn encouragement from – verse 37: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Paul says “in all these things.” “These things” are the things he looks back to in the list of 7 struggles he laid out as possible separators in verse 35. But, if we’re not careful, we can skip right over that two-letter word, “in.” That is as “in” the midst of “tribulation,” or “in” the throes of “distress,” and the like. God rarely delivers His children before we find ourselves with our
backs to the wall; no, it’s often in the midst of suffering and adversity that God delivers us from
danger. That’s because so many things can be learned about our great God during a season of
suffering. And we can learn many things about ourselves when in misery. During dark and
troubling times, we can see the light of Christ more clearly, but we can also see our warts more
clearly, too.

**Time to apply.** Have you experienced this in your life during the last 10 weeks or so? How have you
responded to your difficulties since the pandemic and shutdown? Have you become the source
of tribulation for others? Are you persecuting those who differ/disagree on something
important?

Yes, in all these sufferings, Paul says that Christians are more than conquerors. He just made
reference to we being like “sheep to a slaughter” in verse 36. *What can sheep conquer?* Not
much; in fact, nothing really. And, that’s the point. If God has redeemed us from all eternity,
and He is keeping us by His power and grace, we are more than conquerors because God is for us
and nothing can come between us!

*Isn’t that incredible, unbelievable even?* We are not merely conquerors, but we are something
more than conquerors! We are hyper-conquerors. The Latin is cool here—*super vincemus*: in
all these things we are *supermen* through Him who loved us!

Lillian Weeks has written a poem she entitled, “More Than Conquerors”

| More than conquerors through Him who loved us, read the promise o'er and o'er; |
| Not almost or very nearly, but conquerors and more. |
| When the world to sin would lure me, is there victory for me? |
| Can I stand against the pressure and a conqueror truly be? |
| When the tempter like an angel garbs himself in robes of light, |
| Can I recognize his cunning, be a victor in the fight? |
| And when passions rise within me, anger, jealousy and pride, |
| Can I still be more than conqueror when by these I'm sorely tried? |
| By myself I'm weak and helpless, and I'll fall in sore defeat, |
| As upon life's rugged highway with temptation I shall meet. |
| But with CHRIST, oh blest assurance! More than conqueror I shall be, |
| As I yield HIM full possession and He lives and reigns in me. |

As we move into the last two verses of the chapter, verses 38 & 39, we see that Paul lists 10
circumstances that are potential separators between God’s love and His children. Four of them
are presented in pairs, and the other two singly.
- **Neither death nor life** = in other words, nothing in human experience, “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Many people, even among God’s children, fear death. Dr RC Sproul once said late in his life that he wasn’t afraid of dying; he was only concerned about the process of getting there.

Donald Grey Barnhouse illustrates, “Man lives his life with death before Him. When I was a boy in California, I saw the chickens in a chicken yard scurry for cover and wondered why. My father pointed in the air to a chicken hawk that had sailed over the barn, its shadow falling upon the yard. That was enough for the chickens.

(People) are somewhat like that. They live what they have come to call ‘normal’ lives, knowing that death is hanging over them. New of a fatal automobile crash that has killed some prominent man will cause almost all drivers to go 5 to 10 miles an hour slower than the average, and less chances will be taken, but imperceptibly the speed will creep up again, and after a week or so men (people) will creep up again and after a week or so they take more and more chances with death.” (Barnhouse, 215)

- **As for life, it has its persecutions and trials, with which we’re all familiar. Life can be crueller than death. There’s disappointment, betrayal, loneliness, poverty, lack of fulfillment, aging and the frailty accompanying it to name just a few.**

- **Angels/principalities (rulers) =** nothing in the spiritual realm, whether heavenly bodies or evil spirits “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- **Powers =** nothing that opposes God in any way; “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- **Things present/things to come =** nothing in time “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The present has temptations and struggles. The future has uncertainty.

- **Height/depth =** nothing in space or in any direction or elevation “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- **Not any created thing =** nothing in the whole of creation; “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Dr Sproul’s concluding thoughts on this passage are helpful. “Is it safe? That has been the theme of our study of Romans 8. If we have been saved, we’re safe from anything this world can put against us because God from all eternity has loved and redeemed us. We are His elect. We have been chosen by God to be conformed to the image of Christ and to Christ’s possession – not for a day or a week but for eternity. (That) is our guarantee that nothing can separate us from the great love with which He loves us.” (Sproul, 301)
The fateful charge of Pickett’s Brigade came on July 3rd, the third day at Gettysburg. With tens of thousands watching in awe, these brave men set off beneath the fierce afternoon sun. A mile of farm fields separated them from the Union soldiers up on Cemetery Ridge, but come what may, they were intent on coming to grips with their enemy.

Proudly they marched, battle flags waving, a spectacle more dramatic than anyone there had ever seen. As they drew close, the rebel yell broke from their throats.

The Yankees, crouched behind a stonewall, could wait no longer. Hearts about to burst with emotion, they flung themselves forward to meet the enemy…and then everyone hugged and cried.

This was not the Battle of Gettysburg, however. It was the veterans of Gettysburg, North and South, reenacting the battle 50 years later to the day, July 3rd, 1913. The survivors of Pickett’s Charge retraced their steps with canes and crutches, as their Union counterparts and more than 100,000 spectators looked on. The very men who in their youth had fought as bitter enemies now united to walk the field of battle in peace.

The white-haired veterans, wearing the same uniforms they had fought in 50 years before, exchanged handshakes where they had once exchanged gunfire. Enemies no more. And, all of them grieving the deaths of the brave Americans they served with half a century earlier.

Brothers – Sisters – “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Nothing) shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Amen?