

**More Than Conquerors!**  
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Welcome to worship everyone. I realized the other day that I have shared with you multiple times about the big black mother bear that attacked us years ago when Tim and I were camping up in the Adirondack mountains in NY state above the timberline. In case you haven't hear

This was a bear to be reckoned with, and since her little cub had preceded her and been victimized by our loud banging of pots (that's what we had been told to do) from inside our Sears pop-up special deal vinyl two person tent with a small leak in it...and also a dog....we were fair game for her fury.

I wrote it all up in Guideposts magazine later – the title of the article was called “Sudden Fury”...how the peace of God came upon me during that very stressful time...and how after roaring in my face – halitosis folks...rotting sewer breath....that's what bears have...I learned that in my moment of terrog...and after circling our tent and banging into it...going up on her hind legs...she miraculously left us alone.

And I swore that I would never go camping again. Ever.

Now what does this have to do with Romans 8? I will tell you...I actually want to go camping with you! I want to pitch my tent with you for a few weeks in Romans 8. I want to build a bonfire, roast marshmallows and eat s'mores. I just want to stay in this chapter for the next few weeks because the goal is never to get through the Bible.

Right? What's the goal? The goal is to get the Bible through us.

You see I believe that if we stay here in this section for a little while, camp out in it...it will become more a part of us...and we will begin more and more to operate out of the reality that is here. Does that make sense?

So we are camping out in Romans 8 which has been coined by many Biblical scholars as the true essence of the gospel. If you are not familiar with this passage, get familiar with it. Read it everyday. Let it sink into you. Let it inform you about who God is.

Next week is the women's retreat. If you are not signed up for this you are missing a good one. We have scholarships and you can just go and receive...I don't know why you wouldn't do it...RIO the speaker and I have been working a little bit on it together and the message is all about who God is...the nature of our Creator...and really getting a sense...deep down of his affection for you.

And the reason we are camping out in this passage, Romans 8, is that this awareness can't just be up here.

It has to get into your gut and into your spirit. And if you are a woman, the retreat this year is a great way to get that started.

Also Donna Perry is doing a great thing on Soul Care for a few weeks after worship...and this class is designed to move you from here (head) to here (heart). Go to it...she is an amazing teacher...

Back to Romans 8. It says that we are not simply conquerors; we are more than conquerors. It doesn't always feel that way does it? That's why we have to camp out in Romans 8 for awhile. Marinate in it. Get the Bible through us.

Lets say this together...Romans 8:1

***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, [let's say that together]***

The first word in the sentence in the original language of this verse...is the word 'no.' So what it really says is and its awkward in English so we miss the emphasis of it being stated twice but it actually says: **No condemnation therefore is there now for those in Christ Jesus. No condemnation there.**

We've just had a great Easter service and resurrection celebration so I'd like to draw your attention to a resurrection appearance in John 21 that illustrates this Romans 8 reality.

Now Peter, as many people know, denied Christ three times before Jesus was crucified...and he is completely mortified...still living in the guilt of that.

Now when we were in the Middle East there were lots of roosters. Every morning the roosters would crow – you can't shut them up. Drove me nuts... I was jet lagged and wanted to sleep in. Couldn't do it.

And I am sure every time Peter heard a rooster in the dark of the early dawn, after his denial of Christ that happened right before the rooster crowed, it would bring him pangs of guilt.

And he would think...waking up ...lying on his mat.....why did I do that? How could I have been so stupid!

The Bible says that Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, I think he also prances around like a crowing rooster and it's almost like every morning as Peter woke up, "cock-a-doodle do you loser! Hey, remember that night when Jesus needed you and you denied Him three times?"

Have you ever felt horrible about something that you did and you just couldn't get out of the guilt thing? The remorse? The regret?

That's where Peter is as this story in John 21 when it opens up.

Peter says with a sense of despair "I am going fishing!" – In other words... back to square one...where I was when Jesus called me to follow him – but at this point I am disqualified from being a disciple.... I am just no good... an oily, old weather beaten fisherman with a colored past

So they all go out in the boat with Peter and the resurrected ***Christ then appears on the beach...when day was breaking...when do roosters crow? At daybreak!***

And Jesus calls out to them...Children, have you caught anything?

When we went to the Holy Land I stood on that very beach where this story happened, (it was a pretty sure thing) and I looked out at the shimmering water, and I thought...this is exactly the place... I felt it in my spirit

So... I took a stone back from that beach where Jesus stood and where this resurrection appearance happened...I call it my resurrection stone. I'll let you pass it around...

So in response the disciples say to this unknown stranger on the beach... "no, we haven't caught anything: and Jesus says, put your nets on the other side of the boat and then of course their nets become suddenly full...they bring in a 153 fish.

Now this miracle is a repeat of a miracle that Jesus did before he died when he walked the earth, and so John, who is so aware, recognizes the miracle, and says, "It is the Lord"

And Peter in his inimitable impulsive way...jumps out of the boat and swims to shore...just to see Jesus again.

We don't know what transpired between Jesus and Peter before the disciples with all their flopping fish make their way to shore...What we do know is that

Jesus asks Peter how many times? Three times (undoing the threefold denial)... 'Peter, do you love me?' 'Yes.' 'Feed my sheep.' 'Peter, do you love me?' 'Yes.' 'Feed my sheep.' 'Peter, do you love me?' 'You know I love you.' Feed my lambs

Three times, Jesus, takes that guilt that was plaguing Peter as dawn was breaking everyday, as the rooster crowed, and instead reaffirms him as his disciple.

Asks him three times 'Do you love me?'

To undo that guilt of that threefold denial, so that when dawn would break again, each morning thereafter, Peter would remember seeing the resurrected face of Jesus, instead of his failure.

Its like the Lord is saying to Peter...I want to make sure that from this day forward when you hear the rooster crow every morning, it is a reminder that my mercies are new every morning.'

Here's the bottom line.

The accuser of the brethren (satan, lucifer, the enemy, the devil, the evil one,whatever you call him)wants to condition you with guilt.

He wants you to think about you...your failures, your imperfections, how unspiritual you are, how imperfect and hopeless and Jesus wants to recondition you with his grace.

**Sin minus grace equals guilt. Sin plus grace equals gratitude.**

Here's what happens when you receive the free gift of grace that God offers. The sin that was in your life no longer produces guilt because it is forgiven. It was nailed to the cross.

So now the memory of our sins, because of God's grace, produces gratitude for the Son of God who went to the cross for us.

That is where I think the victory is won or lost. I think that is where many of us, if we could just get that from here (the Bible) to here (in our heads) to here (in our hearts) it would change the way we live on a daily basis.

Lets say these words together again...

***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***

The key word here is ‘now.’

This is our present reality, not past tense, not just a victory that was won 2,000 years ago, but it is something that we’ve got to experience as present tense reality all the time.

I love what Martin Luther said. He said, **“Live as if Christ was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today and is coming back tomorrow.”**

I think half of our problems have to do with mismanaging past, present and future. Things like guilt and anxiety, so we aren’t fully alive and fully present because we are so stuck in the past or so worried about the future.

What we’ve got to do, is recognize that his mercies are new every morning. Every morning, we’ve got to go back to the foot of the cross, thank Jesus for the victory that He won and live it out.

**We have this tendency to remember what we should forget and forget what we should remember. So we tend to remember the negative things that produce guilt in us instead of remembering the victory that Christ won.**

What if every day we committed to spend a lot more time contemplating the face of the resurrected Christ, instead of our own failures? Maybe we would begin to live in the victory that right now, here, today, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

I want Becky to come up here and share with us today. When I told her we were camping out in Romans 8 for awhile she shared this story with me. I wanted you to hear it from her...and I also wanted you to know that she doesn’t just sing...she actually can talk...

Thanks Becky...