

Love Conquers All

The power of the cross is the power of love. When God chose to conquer the enemies of sin and death he did not choose the power of coercive strength that so many people and nations turn to, but instead he turned to the power of love. This love, according to Paul, is a love that makes a difference - particularly during life's most difficult times. That's the message of this week's passage and the meaning behind this song by Third Day.

*To all of the people with burdens and pains
Keeping you back from your life
You believe that there's nothing and there is no one
Who can make it right
[Yet] there is hope for the helpless
Rest for the weary
Love for the broken heart
There is grace and forgiveness
Mercy and healing
He'll meet you wherever you are
Cry out to Jesus...*

Song lyrics from Third Day's, "Cry Out to Jesus", *Wherever You Are*

Monday – Justified!

"There may be many 'against us' [Rom. 8:38-39], but in relation to the one God, they are nothing." J.D.G. Dunne

jus-ti-fi-ca-tion – the act of God whereby humankind is made or accounted just, or free from guilt or penalty of sin.

1. Read Romans 8:31-39. What is your first impression of this passage? What is its tone?
2. As you look at verses 31-33 how would you contrast the ideas of "condemn" and "justify"?
3. Paul uses the concept of "justification" throughout Romans. Why is this an essential truth for all believers to understand?

Tuesday – Death, Resurrection, and Intercession

"Through his divine raising from the dead, Christ's hopeless end became his new beginning. If we remember that, we shall not give ourselves up, but shall expect that in every end a new beginning lies hidden."

Jürgen Moltmann, *In the End—The Beginning*

1. Death, resurrection, and intercession are foundational to our faith in Christ. Read Romans 8:32-34. What role does each play in the Christian faith?
2. Why does Paul emphasize these concepts to those who are going through difficult times?

Wednesday – Suffering

"Suffering...is an opportunity to be embraced, a chance to discover our desire for the highest blessing God wants to give us, an encounter with himself." Larry Crabb, *Shattered Dreams*

1. Paul suffered (2 Corinthians 11:26-27) from many of the same trials listed in Romans 8:35. Please read these verses. How might Paul's experience give greater weight to what he says in Romans 8:36-39?
2. There is a tendency for the people of God, who are oppressed and suffering, to question God's presence (Ps. 44:22-24) and his dealings with evil (Rev. 6:10). Site examples from Romans 8 where Paul reassures Christians that their suffering is temporary, purposeful, and accompanied by the Lord.
3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:10 and explain the paradox, "When I am weak, then I am strong."

Thursday – Conquering through Christ

"The victories of God over all the forces in the universe which are resistant to his will are to be won, not by the thunderbolts of coercive might, but by the persuasive constraints of self-sacrificing love."

G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*

1. Read Romans 8:37, Romans 5:10, Colossians 2:13-15, and Hebrews 10:10-14. How did Jesus "conquer" his enemies?
2. In what sense does Christ help us "conquer" our trials and tribulations? Why should this truth bring us joy and hope?

Friday – Saving Us from Our Enemies

"I humbly bless and thankfully glorify thy holy name, that thou hast afforded me the light of thy Spirit, against which the prince of darkness cannot prevail, nor hinder His illumination of our darkest nights, of our saddest thoughts." John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, XIV, "Prayer"*

1. Read Romans 8:38-39. What phrase is most comforting to you? Why?
2. Why do you think Paul mentions "death" at the very beginning of this list of enemies?
3. Which one of these enemies is holding you back from the life God has for you?

For the weekend – Total Assurance

"The message of the love of God is inseparably bound up with the memory of the cross of Christ. It is here that God's love has been convincingly proved and unmistakably defined." Klaus Haacker, *Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans*

1. Read Romans 8:35-39 with the cross of Christ in mind, how does the cross lend meaning to these verses?
 2. Why is it especially important for Christians to concentrate on the "love of God" in the midst of difficult times? Why are all other forms of coping bound to disappoint us in the long-term?
 3. How might the "love of God" as revealed in Christ Jesus and the New Testament, be the answer to the problem of suffering?