

Anyone who has been around Christian missions for very long is familiar with the name “William Carey.” ... He is known as “the Father of Modern Missions.” ... His story is a fascinating one. It has encouraged me at so many different levels – down through the years.

William Carey... an impoverished shoe-maker in the late 1700’s was an unlikely candidate for greatness. His childhood was rather routine... except for the persistent problems of allergies – which kept young Carey from pursuing his dream of being a gardener.

At age 16... his father apprenticed him to a shoe-maker. (Carey’s father was (himself) a weaver – but he struggled terribly to eeek out a living... because this was during the “Industrial Revolution”... and machines were now producing the same work... but much faster!)

William Carey gave his life to Christ as a teenager. ... Before he turned 20... he had married the daughter of the shoe-maker that he had been apprenticed to. Dorothy was more than 5 years older than William. ... The earliest of their years together was filled with poverty and hardship. ... His master died... and so William took it upon himself to provide for his late-master’s widow... her 4 children... and his own (fast-growing) family.

In 1785... Carey was asked to serve as a pastor in a very poor church in the village of Moulton. It was a place of humble beginnings for any pastor. His salary would be less than the pay of a local farm laborer... so he would have to continue his work as a shoe-maker... to supplement his income. Yet it was here the roots of an idea that would change a country and awaken worldwide movements would take hold.

During those years as a pastor... he was particularly inspired by his reading of "Captain Cook's Voyages." William Carey developed a **radical** vision that the Gospel needed to be brought to the heathen – of foreign lands.

Carey was called in 1789 to pastor another church in Leicester, England. During his ministry there... Carey's passion for missions developed into a **fire** that could not be extinguished. ... Armed with Scripture in one hand and his statistics in the other... he could no longer be silent.

He began working on a pamphlet entitled An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen. (They LOVED long titles back then...) ... He desired that this 87-page booklet... which he tried to distribute broadly among pastors and their congregations... would **awaken** churches from spiritual apathy towards evangelism... and convince them of the need for world missions.

As Carey conveyed his radical ideas to a group of pastors... the leader of the group spoke the common attitude (of the day) about missions. He rebuked William Carey severely: "*Young man! Sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen... He will do it without your aid or mine!*"

But Carey refused to be silent about his radical concept of foreign missions. He travelled all over England trying to awaken believers to the Great Commission.

Finally... Carey became convinced that God wanted **HIM** to go and take the Gospel to India. His own father called him a "madman" and Dorothy absolutely **refused** to go. (She thought that her refusal would change his

mind.) – It didn't! William Carey persisted with strong resolve... and Dorothy grudgingly caved. She resentfully joined him on his venture.

When they got to India... they found the conditions for ministry were relentlessly difficult. Tropical fevers exacted a high toll on them... and eventually Dorothy returned to England.

Carey worked hard to learn Bengali... Sanskrit... and Marathi. He only slept a few hours every night... and for several years... kept a grueling schedule. His task was to print dictionaries for the languages he learned... and to translate the Bible into those languages. Evangelism was a major concern – but even after many years of faithful witnessing – he did not have a single convert.

In March of 1812... as he neared the completion of his translation work... a devastating fire swept through his workshop... which contained all of his many years of translation work. All of it was lost... the Bengali Bible... Sanskrit... and Marathi. And even more devastating was the loss of his vital printing equipment.

There he was... without a single victory to show for his years and years of sleeplessness and grueling effort. The believers back in England had only reluctantly sent him to the Foreign Mission Field. He was on probation. They saw it as an experiment... but didn't really share William Carey's conviction and enthusiasm. How would they receive the news of his failure and (now) tragic loss. Carey was convinced that they would see this as proof that God simply would not bless foreign missions. Carries opponents would now have significant ammunition to deal the final blow in killing such a radical idea... as missions. End of the experiment!

Romans 8:36

Romans 8:26 is the William Carey story. Believing God... he left the comforts of home in England... learned a new culture... taught himself three foreign languages... became separated from his wife... printed dictionaries and translations of Bible... working long hours into the night – for YEARS! William Carey was put to death all day long. And for what...? He was a sheep being led only to the slaughter.

Romans 8:26 is the William Carey story... but... what if I were to tell you that it is **YOUR** story as well...? ... The way Paul presents it (here in today's passage) – **IT IS** ! ... (gulp!)

But it isn't just Romans 8:36. Look at...

John 15:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

(It's very clear!)... God does not shelter us from the difficulties of life. Why? - Because we need them for our spiritual growth. ... In Romans 8:28 God assures us that the difficulties of life are working for us and not against us. ... God permits trials to come... that we might use them for our good and His glory. God is fashioning us into the image of Christ.

Furthermore... (what we are about to read in the VERY NEXT VERSE is that those hardships will not defeat us. ... We are "*more than conquerors*," literally, "*we are superconquerors*" through Jesus Christ!

But before we go to Romans 8:37... let's return to the William Carey story. ... When the news about the fire that destroyed William Carey's work and

equipment reached England... God used it to awaken people from their spiritual lethargy. Thousands learned about William Carey's dedication and were *inspired* by it. They became burdened for the lost and were moved to give sacrificially to spread the Gospel into foreign lands. Out of the ashes of this seeming tragedy... the missionary movement (that we so often take for granted - today) rose up!

Romans 8:36 – **AND 37** is the William Carey story. ... Romans 8:36 – **AND 37** is your story and mine! ... Yes! We will suffer persecution. – But we will NOT be overcome.

Romans 8:37

"*In all these things . . .*" What things? ... Everything the Christian experiences. ... The joys... the sorrows... the setbacks... the triumphs — all of it. ... In all these things - we (the sheep) – **conquer!**

We have just been reminded in the previous verse... by a quotation from the Old Testament (Psalm 44:22) ... that the people of God "*face death all day long*" and are "*considered as sheep to be slaughtered.*" ... The world is NO more concerned about our suffering... as it is about lambs that are about to be butchered. ... But now... here in verse 37... we are told that (nevertheless) we are all "*more than conquerors.*"

James Montgomery Boice writes:

Sheep that conquer? We can think of lions that conquer, or wolves or polar bears or wild buffalo. Edgar Allan Poe even spoke of "the conquering worm," meaning that at last death comes to all. But sheep? The very idea of sheep as conquerors seems ludicrous.

The image of sheep overcoming and conquering an enemy is laughable! Fighting sheep? ... How can a sheep for the slaughter be more than a conqueror? ... This is another wonderful paradox of the Christian faith. ... What does it mean to be more than a conqueror?

Well... this is figurative language (of course.) ... But the image is not meaningless... nor is it as ludicrous as it seems. ... (You see)... In contrast to the world and its power... Christians are indeed weak and despised. (They are as helpless as a flock of sheep.) ... But we are (in fact) conquerors... because we have been loved by the Lord Jesus Christ... and have been made conquerors - "through Him."

In the original language of the New Testament... the word "conquerors" is a compound word... which comes from the base word (in Greek) "nikao" which means to "overcome"... or to "conquer." In Ancient Greece they had a goddess whose name comes from this word. Her name was Nike... which means "victory." (Pretty good name for an athletic shoe, huh?)

But Paul wrote this base word "nikao" and put in front of it the prefix "hyper"... which means "over and above"... or "more than." When Paul put the two words together... he conveys that we are "super-conquerors." (We are "super-conquerors" whether or not we wear Nike athletic shoes!)

But how can that be? ... How can those who are despised and rejected...troubled... persecuted... exposed to famine and nakedness... danger and sword — how can such people be thought of as overcomers... super-overcomers at that?

Well... let's just stop and consider this... for a moment... before we move on. ... Don't pass too quickly over this. This is not some spiritual over-statement that might only be true for a select few Christians. Every believer must have NO DOUBTS that this is true for them. When persecution comes – this is a truth that we must bank on! It will get us through. (So let me give you two things to think about)...

The first thing that we need to realize... is that we **ARE** more than conquerors... because we are fighting against an enemy who is more than human. ... We will see as we continue on (into the next several verses)... that Paul is thinking of the devil and his hosts... and he is saying that our battle (however human it may seem)... is actually **supernatural**. (It is a spiritual battle.) ... Therefore our victories are supernatural too. We are more than conquerors.

The devil devises more schemes in a minute than we can conceive in a lifetime - and all of them are directed toward our destruction. ... But we do not overcome in our own strength. Look again at what verse 37 says - "*through him who loved us.*" ... None of us could stand against Satan's hostile forces - even for a moment. ... But in Jesus Christ... we can stand firm and fight on to victory.

#1. We **ARE** more than conquerors... because we are fighting against an enemy who is more than human.

#2. we **ARE** more than conquerors... because the spiritual victories we achieve are eternal.

I was driving down the road the other day and an excited voice on the radio flashed back with: “*Your 2019 Pac-12 Football Champions – The Oregon Ducks!*” ... and I thought “*Oh yeah... they did win... last year!*” Even when it is a team that I more closely follow (like my Fresno State Bulldogs)... the glory of their victories – fade. ... I was so caught-up in the 2008 College World Series... when Fresno State won it all... but it is hard for me to be very excited about it NOW. ... Every earthly victory (no matter how incredible it is at the time) will fade and be forgotten. Great monuments will crumble. Works of great art will decay. Fortunes will be dissipated. Heroes will die. ... Not so with our spiritual victories! ... These will surpass anything ever attained by earthly conquerors.

Napoleon once said that men are led by "trinkets"... meaning titles... medals... and other such glory symbols. ... The world's soldiers have their rewards... but they are earthly rewards. ... (LISTEN!) You and I look for rewards in heaven.

Now... as the Apostle Paul continues... he gives us something to focus on... that will help us get through hardships (that God allows)... and grow us into super-conquerors. ... The key is to focus on Christ’s never-failing love. Which verse 37 ends with... and then verses 38-39 carry through on.

Romans 8:38-39

Whenever we face persecution or trial in our life... it is natural for us to assume that God doesn’t love us anymore. It (sometimes) feels like Christ has abandoned us... doesn’t it...? Otherwise... why would He allow us to go through this. ... But the truth is... we need to know something about His never-failing love... in order to make it through the difficulty.

(LISTEN!)... If we believe these overwhelming assurances... we will not be afraid of any trial or persecution. We will be super-conquerors over any trial in our life.

In both death and the trials of life in this evil world... we are secure in Christ... and will be made into the image of Christ. ... No spiritual forces... such as angels or demons... are powerful enough to alter what God has for us. ... Nothing in the sphere of time itself (fears and worries) can threaten us; nothing that can happen in the present... and nothing that can happen in the future... such as persecution and hardship... would cause God to leave us.

And by-the-way... after seeing how much Paul goes out of his way... leaving no possible power or entity... using extremes to make his point about how secure we are in Christ... don't let anyone tell you that it is possible for a Christian to lose their salvation. Either Scripture (here) is **true**... rendering **false** the claims that believers can be let go by Christ... or Paul was out of his mind when he wrote this... and you **CAN** loose your salvation. ... I believe what Scripture so **emphatically** declares!

No powers that exist (Satan, human governments, etc.) are more powerful than God. ... They can have no effect on our relationship with Him. ... Nothing in space... from high above or in the deepest ocean... can take us away from God's love. ... Nothing in all creation (including **our own selves**) can take us away from God's love or thwart his purposes for us. Talk about eternal security!

Paul's point is simple and compelling. ... Once in His care... it is impossible to be separated from Christ. ... His death for us is proof of His unconquerable love. ... Nothing can stop His constant presence with us. God tells us how great His love is... so that we will feel totally secure in Him. ... And I'll say it again: If you believe these overwhelming assurances... you will not be afraid of any trial or persecution.

Our passage today is very reminiscent of God's words to Israel... when they needed encouragement:

Isaiah 43:1-3 (ESV)

¹ But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Because God rules over everything in time and space... nothing can subvert His will - (which is to bring His people to Himself... cleanse us of sin inside and out... and shape us into the image of Christ.) God will use "all things" – every circumstance of your life to accomplish this.

.....

I have no idea what challenges you are facing today... or what sorrows weigh heavily on your heart. ... You would expect me to say this... (nevertheless) I must - because it is true: God knows.

It is a great truth of Scripture that God knows everything. He is omniscient. God is not discovering. ... God is not learning. ... God is not watching and

then adapting His plan to fit what might help make us comfortable. ... His plan is set. ... His knowledge is thorough. ... And He gives purpose to every chaotic circumstance of this fallen... corrupted world.

(LISTEN!)... He loves us completely — more than anyone can love us... even ourselves. Therefore, we can rest in His plan. As musician Michael W. Smith said: “*God is still God... and I’m still not.*”

Surely there is absolutely nothing in all creation that can separate the believer in Christ from God’s love in Jesus Christ. Whether we live or die... we are safe. ... We have nothing to fear from either the angelic or the demonic realm — or from any kind of spiritual evil... no matter how hellish.

Our anxieties and fears of the moment... our worries about the future — these things have no power to sever our relationship with Christ. ... There is nothing... absolutely nothing in the whole universe — from one end to the other... from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell — that has the power to overcome God’s love for us in Jesus Christ.

So I ask of you: Is this *your* testimony? ... Have you been persuaded of these truths... as Paul was? ... Can you say, “*I no longer have any doubts. I know that salvation is entirely of God and that he will keep me safe until the very end*”?

- **Gospel Presentation Here** -