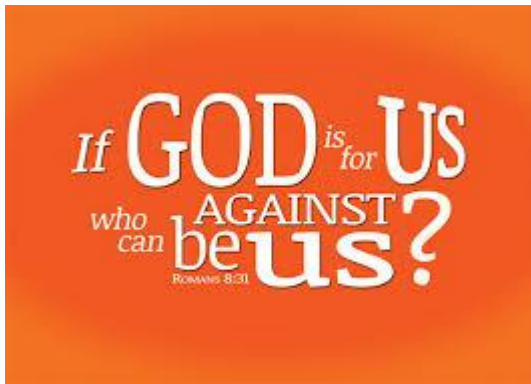


## Sunday Evening 4th May 2014, Kenneth Gray Romans 8: 28-39 “More than conquerors”



This familiar passage is often quoted at funerals because it beautifully encapsulates the great hope that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Paul begins by making the absolutely incredible affirmation that *“in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”*

All through our lives we are exhorted to do things that people claim are ‘good for us’. Usually these are things we’d prefer not to do because they entail effort or discomfort or even pain. It can be of little comfort to hear from parents or friends, teachers or doctors “you’ll thank me later”. We can even resist and feel resentful towards those who have our best interests at heart. Here Paul reminds us that we can fall into the trap of thinking in the same negative way about the situations that God can put us in. The truth is that, in a wonderful way we cannot yet understand, things do not just happen randomly.

We must strive to be like Jesus, to love what he loves and to desire the joy of knowing his presence in our hearts. As Paul says in Galatians 5-*“...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. .”*

All these qualities should characterise us as Christians but we so seldom exhibit this fruit. It is as if we feel entitled to be twisted and bitter when life is hard for us. We should all try to be and to act more like Jesus.

Jesus experienced the resurrection and so will we! We are full of awe and wonder at Easter but we will all come to know what it feels like to be raised to eternal life. Jesus is the First born but we too will experience rebirth.

Paul sets the scene beautifully - “And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

This passage is not about the generalities of theology – it is an affirmation that Jesus died for us all as individuals. For the New Testament writers the Resurrection is not a one-off event but an experience to be enjoyed and celebrated every day. If we think about daily life in those terms we will become less concerned about our worldly cares and remain joyful and grateful to God.

As children of God we are unconquerable. These days many Christians are under constant scrutiny but only God can justify or condemn. Jesus is interceding for us so we need no other protector. That trust is what Satan tries to destroy by visiting troubles and disasters on the world. He uses things like famines and floods to try to undermine people’s faith.

Sometimes we try to explain away the bad things that happen or attempt to come to terms with them by saying things like “At least we’re not as badly off as (for example) those poor people in Nigeria or Syria”. What we need to realise is that it is not our love for God that’s the key – it is his love for us. We can understand this better perhaps if we are parents. We continue to love our children despite the bad things they sometimes do. We do not love them because of what they do but because they are ours. It is the same with God’s love for us – we are his. That is what makes us ‘more than conquerors’.

Paul is not saying that bad things will not happen or that Satan will not send troubles into our lives. He is saying that no matter what does happen nothing can separate us from God’s love.

Unless the Lord returns in power the day will come when we will each die. Then the next thing we will see will be the radiant face of God because Jesus has made this possible for us. The Resurrection is at the heart of what it means to be a son or daughter of God.