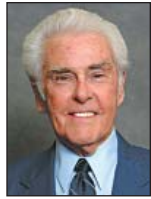


# God's promise of answered prayer

In our sports-oriented society, winning victory is the major challenge for teams of all kinds. This is also true for nations at war.



**John Howell**

Winston Churchill declared this in his speech to the English House of Commons in 1940. "What is our aim?...Victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terrors; victory, however long and hard the way may be; for without victory, there is no survival."

Even with football teams, without victory there is no authentic "survival." But is this not also true for the challenge of religious commitment and trust in God's plan for our lives? Can our faith be humble yet victorious in its manifestation in our lives? Paul believed so.

**God has a plan and purpose for us that is good (Romans 8:28-30).** Later in Romans, Paul wrote: "I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:1-2).

In this section of our text, Paul teaches the place of the Holy Spirit in giving the Christian guidance for life. William Barclay says that Paul goes on from there when he says that those "who love God, and who are called according to His purpose, know well that God is intermingling all things for good to them" (The Letter to the Romans, p. 117). The heart of this message is that all things find their good in Jesus Christ as Lord. At times this estimation of Christ as Savior means that the Lord must become our deliverer in

the battles of life. Whenever we read biographies of Christian saints over their many years of serving Christ, they found in conflict "they won their crowns and earned the right to enter in and possess new territories of the soul" (A. Ian Burnett, Lord of All, pp. 96-97). This victory comes only to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

**God has already given us his best in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:31-34).** If we love God and are responding to his call and purpose, then we can achieve the victory of our faith. Hymn writer E.M. Bartlett captures this theme in his "Victory in Jesus."

*"I heard an old, old story  
of how a Savior came from glory,  
How He gave His life on Calvary  
to save a wretch like me:  
I heard about His groaning,  
of His precious blood atoning,  
Then I repented of my sins  
and won the victory.  
O victory in Jesus, my Savior,  
forever He sought me  
And bought me  
with His redeeming blood;  
He loved me ere I knew Him,  
and all my love is due Him,  
He plunged me to victory  
beneath the cleansing flood."*

Since God has achieved our victory in the struggles and challenges of daily life, he will continue to intercede for us when we continually seek his intercession. Jesus in his renewed relation with the Father is seated on the right hand of God in order to intercede for us rather than being a critical judge of our lives. As Barclay explains it, Jesus has "the right to condemn — but so far from condemning, he is at God's right hand interceding for us, and therefore we are safe" (p. 22).

**Nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:35-39).** We all recognize that at times our prayer is like Jesus' prayer from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). But just

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as Jesus went on to commit himself to the Father, we come to confess that our prayer was not authentic. God has not abandoned us, and all of the drastic events that Paul identifies "cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Biblical scholar C.H. Dodd objects to the recent conclusions that Paul was not a systematic thinker. "Doubtless he had in him more of the prophet than of the doctor of divinity. But no one can go honestly through the labour of following the story and coherent, though complicated, thread of argument, from Romans 1:17 to 8:39 without knowing that he is in the presence of a first-rate scholar, as well as a man of deepest religious insight" (The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. 16).

What many scholars agree on is that these sections of Romans reflect more of a poetical approach than a strictly prose expression of Paul's devotion to Christ as Savior and Lord. Barclay's summary of these verses is a fitting closure to our lesson.

"It was Paul's picture that when a man became a Christian he entered into the very family of God. He [or she] did nothing to earn it; he did nothing to deserve it; God the great Father in His amazing love and mercy has taken the lost, helpless, poverty-stricken, debt-laden sinner and adopted him into His own family, so that the debts are cancelled and the unearned love and glory inherited" (p. 112).

His victory was assured.

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