

When in Rome: More Than Conquerors

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Date: 28 June 2026

Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0:00] All right. Does everyone feel sufficiently greeted? Hi, how are you? Good morning. How are you? Good to see you all! So I get to do all the little public service announcement stuff.

Is this your phone? I think if this were your phone, you would have said, where's my phone before now? I'm going to text this phone. No, I can't even do that. So it does say it has a faith sticker on the back, which I think is having faith that you'll ever see your phone again, I guess.

So I don't think it belongs to any of us. It may be Arabic church, so I'll check with them. Someone is missing their phone. Yeah, I would be in a white hot panic if that happened.

So it ain't me. Okay, now I have to change tracks here quickly. Paul Samamo, who attended our church approximately 25 years ago, unexpectedly passed away this week.

He passed away after a brief illness, and some current Braemar folks will still remember Paul and his family and knew them well. Paul's funeral service is being held this coming Saturday, July 4th at 11 a.m. at Hillview Baptist in Millwoods.

[1:21] Sam Brakey, former pastor of Braemar, lots of you know Sam well, and I certainly do. The Samamo family knew him best, so he's going to be officiating that service.

And this will be mentioned in this week's newsletter that goes out, but please feel free to let anyone you know who might like to attend know about it. Everyone is certainly welcome.

Paul and his wife Amsel owned a popular Ethiopian restaurant in Edmonton that was legendary called Lugano Skies. It was frequented by many Braemarites over the years, and please pray for the Samamo family during this difficult time.

Will you pray with me this morning? Father God, in a world that seems to have gone crazy and lost its way in so many different ways, we come to you this morning not just seeking answers, but seeking strength and courage for the days ahead.

We pray for courage to be the people that you have called us to be, people who seek justice and peace through your love for all people.

[2:33] We struggle with questions that seem to have no answers and problems that seem to have, at best, insurmountable solutions. Lord, comfort us and remind us to keep trusting you, even and especially when the road ahead seems unclear.

As we look and listen to people around the world, Father, so many seem divided and at war with one another, either through words or worse. Bring peace to relationships in our lives and around the world.

Lord, we recognize that just this past week, significant earthquakes affected California and Venezuela and Japan. And while experts say that they are not directly connected, not the same earthquake echoing across those regions, it is not lost on us that these are significant events.

Lord, the death toll in Venezuela continues to climb. When I last looked, it was estimated to be 864, and as far as I know this morning, it is over 1,000.

There are many, many people who are injured, Lord, who are lost and missing, as many as 50,000 lost and missing right now in that country. And so we know that death toll may continue to climb.

[3:55] Lord, I ask for comfort for people in all of those countries and communities where these earthquakes have left a devastating impact. Whether through loss of life or damage to property and homes or anything, Lord, people will be shaken by these events to their core and for many days ahead.

And we pray for confidence and comfort and peace for first responders who are working hard to give people answers. We pray for comfort and peace for the people who have lost loved ones or lost belongings or homes.

Lord, provide in ways that we can't even begin to imagine. Lord, how we humans must really test your patience. I know I certainly probably do that.

But we know that your love is all-encompassing. It's never-ending. And it's always forgiving. Thank you for that. We're humbled in recognizing that you love all of us unconditionally.

You consider each of us important and a part of your creation. Help us to be more like your Son, Father. Jesus, who was sent to show us how to live and respect others.

[5:12] Today, O God, we ask you to help us to be change agents in the world. Give us courage to speak out about our faith. To teach those around us about your love for all people.

To model that love in all that we say and do. And to lead by example, showing and speaking with respect to each other and others.

And we pray all these things in the precious, powerful, and wonderful name of your Son and our Lord Jesus. Amen. Welcome here for this Sunday, June 28th, 2026.

My name is Kent Dixon, and it is my joy to be the pastor here. So we're continuing in our sermon series, When in Rome, which is in the book of Romans. We're doing a deep dive through the book over the past weeks and coming weeks ahead.

We're making our way through this book systematically, uncovering some of these timeless truths that it holds. That are as true as when Paul wrote them, as they are for us today.

[6:16] So many of you know that Michelle's mom lives in southern Alberta. So her experience with the sermon is the phone line, which we thought long ago, for people who don't like computers, don't know computers, aren't interested in becoming friends with computers, they can use the phone line.

So I got a phone call on my cell earlier this week, probably Monday or Tuesday, with a message, Kent, it's your mother-in-law. I want to talk to you about a few things.

And I thought, oh, no. So I thought, well, I'll just delay. No, I didn't. I promptly returned phone calls to my mother-in-law lest I be destroyed.

So I phoned her back and I said, what's up? And I thought, she's going to hit me with some theological question or she's going to say, well, you know, actually, I looked in my Bible and my Bible doesn't say what your Bible says.

But no. She said, you know what? She said, in that last sermon when you talked about the earth creation groaning as if in labor, I said, yep.

[7:26] She said, I never thought of it that way before. And I said, which part? And I said, the fact that Paul is equating the groaning of the earth, the broken world, the way God didn't intend it to be, to a woman giving birth?

I said, is that not a connection that you made? And she said, well, I wonder. This was cute. She said, I wonder. And now she's going to hear this. And then I'm really going to get in trouble. So she said, well, she said, I never really got the connection of, because that way we call it labor.

So this is a retired nurse, right? So she said, is that why we call it labor now? Because Paul referred it to that way, to it that way. And I said, actually, it's the other way around.

I said, Paul, recognizing the pain of labor that a woman goes through in delivering a child, equated the groaning of the earth, made that direct analogy that the earth is feeling this pain because it's not how it's supposed to be, right?

But it made me think. It made her think. And I think that's, I think. That's just a great thing when we're able to recognize the truth in Scripture in maybe a new way.

[8:40] And that's what I said at the beginning of this series, at the beginning of our Acts series, is that even if you know all of this, and you probably do, some of the context and some of the background and some of the dots that I'm going to try and connect for you, and have tried to connect for you over the years, will make sense and make you say, oh, I never thought of this that way.

Or I never connected these two pieces, maybe from Acts and Romans together. I never really understood the depth and breadth of Paul's writing, for example. So all those kinds of aha moments are what I hope we continue to have.

So our passage for this morning is Romans 8, 26 to 39. So go ahead and look that up in your Bible. Look it up in your app. And I will give the audiobook version.

Romans 8, 26 to 39, which says, In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

[10:03] For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

And those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. Those he justified, he also glorified. What then shall we say in response to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one.

Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[11:07] Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? Lord, as it is written, for your sake we face death all day long.

We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I'm convinced...

You know this is my favorite benediction... One of my favorite Pauline benedictions. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yes! That is absolutely amen-worthy. Our sermon this morning is titled, More Than Conquerors, and you heard it in the passage. We're continuing in Romans 8, and it's often viewed, as I mentioned last week, as one of the most encouraging chapters in all of Scripture, which is, considering all of Scripture, it is high praise.

In these verses, the Apostle Paul reminds us, as believers, that God is at work in every circumstance. That Christ continually intercedes for us.

[12:29] Do you need intercession in your life? That nothing can separate us from God's love. I've talked about this before.

When I reflect on Father's Day, my dad is gone, right? But nothing, not even his death, not even my mother's death, can separate them from God's love, can separate me from God's love, that we will see each other again.

So when life is difficult, when faith is tested, this passage, I believe, provides confidence, and comfort, and above all, hope.

We need hope in our world right now, don't we? So this morning we're going to consider, here's your three-point sermon, I don't often do them, but here you go, three main things that we can learn from our passage for today.

Don't write these down and then leave. God helps us in our weakness. God secures our salvation. And nothing can separate us from God's love, period.

[13:38] So I want to begin with recognizing first that God helps us in our weakness. And this is in Romans 8, 26-28, focuses on this.

Paul acknowledges a reality that every believer experiences. I could say, any guesses? Weakness. There are times when we don't know what to pray.

Can you relate to that? What to do in a given situation. Or even how to express to God what our deepest needs are, our deepest hurts.

Romans 8, 26 gives us comfort and encouragement in this challenge. As it says, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. With one of the members of the Trinity literally living inside of you, he is interceding on your behalf.

He's giving you strength to face challenges in your life. He intercedes for us and gives us help in our weakness. And it says in this passage, with groanings, there's groanings again, too deep for words.

[14:50] The Spirit feels what we feel and intercedes according to that. So even when our prayers seem inadequate, God still understands the language of our hearts.

We've talked about this in the past. Why do we even pray? Because God knows what we need. God knows our circumstances, yada, yada. He wants us to engage with him.

Remember, it's a relationship. So if I don't talk to Michelle for a month, probably doesn't go that well. Now, we'll pick up from where we left off, probably.

But do you see how weird that would be to have an intimate, close relationship in your life that you just kind of phone it in on once in a while? Doesn't make a lot of sense. So the good news is that we're not left alone.

The Spirit is with us. Paul then gives one of the most beloved promises in all of Scripture. He says, And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him.

[16:00] This doesn't mean that all things are good. Hear that? We can all agree that suffering and loss and hardship are very, very real.

And it's also important to dispel one thing, I think, many of us tend to believe. That's the idea or the suggestion that somehow God creates bad things specifically to throw them in our path.

Do you believe that? That bad things and hard circumstances are somehow crafted by God to test us. That's not something that, for me, aligns with God's character in any way.

But God definitely allows things to happen in our lives. That's one of the greatest challenges against Christianity that atheists and other religions will bring, is that if God is all good and all knowing, why is there evil in the world?

Why is there sin in the world? That's a very long other sermon. Because of free will, is the bottom line. He gives us the opportunity to make choices.

[17:13] In our basic sinful nature, we make bad choices that hurt us, that hurt other people. But we're also not meant to go it alone here either.

We're meant to draw closer to God when we're struggling or when we're hurting. When we're at the end of our own capacity to understand or even continue on.

And as we've been reminded in this passage this morning, God is able to work through every circumstance to accomplish His purposes. And He will use those things, good and bad, to shape us into the likeness of Christ.

God also doesn't just work in random, isolated incidents. He works in some things or all things.

Hear it very quietly. It's not a library. I'm married to a librarian, but yell out things. I can take it. As you know. Our world is fallen.

[18:21] Our world is broken. You've heard me say it over and over. Things aren't how they were meant to be. But God will absolutely use everything that happens for our long-term good.

Can you remember going through something difficult or painful in your life? Something that came out of the blue and was totally unexpected and totally unwelcome.

Maybe it's something that happened a long time ago. Maybe it's something that happened more recently. Maybe you had an awkward interaction with a very big knife.

Maybe you're just going through it right now. Maybe the difficult time for you is right now. And maybe in those circumstances, when you think about them, maybe you were at peace the whole time when you think back.

Maybe you were able to keep your eyes on Jesus and you felt his hand in yours. You felt him comforting you and leading you through every step of the way. Or maybe you felt confused or angry or frustrated or alone and isolated.

[19:41] Friends, whatever reactions or responses you recognize in your own experiences, neither makes you a shining example of a perfect follower of Jesus or a horrible person who is somehow completely lacking faith.

See that? You are neither extreme. But I hope, though, that you can also recognize how God used what seemed to be a painful and pointless experience at the time to give you a new perspective on his presence and his plans for your life.

Friends, God uses everything. I can attest to that in my own story. God also, contrary to some popular Christian belief, God isn't working to make us happy or satisfied in some sort of temporary or temporal sense.

He's working to fulfill his ultimate purpose and plan for us and for our lives. As the words of that familiar worship song say, even when I don't see it, you're working.

This promise that God will work all things for good, hear this, you'll be shocked, isn't for everyone. Hold that thought.

[21:12] Hold the angry email. While it's absolutely available to everyone, it is ultimately only for people who love God, as Paul says, are called according to his purpose.

This isn't an ATM that anyone just goes to and goes beep, beep, beep, and you get all things working together for good. If you are not seeking God in your life, if you have not submitted your will to God's will, this isn't for you.

So what does Paul mean when he refers to somebody being called here? I'm sure we'd all, we'd have as many definitions as we have people in the room. Those who are called are those that the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ.

Someone who has been called should have a new perspective and a new mindset on life. One that is focused on God and his will, his will, for their lives and for the world.

One commentary I read said that called people are this. They trust in God, not life's treasures. They look for their security in heaven, not on earth.

[22 : 35] They learn to accept, not resent, pain and persecution because God is with them.

So in practical terms then, what does this mean for our lives? Trust God when you can't see the whole picture. Pray honestly knowing that the Spirit is helping you and believe that God is still working even in difficult seasons.

Our second takeaway for this morning is that God secures our salvation. This is in Romans 8, 29 to 34. Paul makes a really smooth transition as he moves from this discussion of our present struggles to God's eternal plan.

He reminds believers that God has known them and called them and justified them and will ultimately glorify them as well. And the passage also emphasizes that salvation begins and ends with God's grace.

It reminds us that God's purpose for people, his purpose for you and for me, wasn't some kind of afterthought. Oh, I forgot about Vern.

[23 : 58] I need to make sure Vern has a plan, so let me just put that together. No! Before the beginning of the world, he knew you and he knew me. He was settled and established on a plan for our lives before, scripture tells us, before the foundation of the world.

That's a long time ago. So if, when, whatever your story is, when you discovered Jesus, when you learned about Jesus, when you gave your life to him, Jesus didn't say, oh, hey, good to see you, I had no idea.

He knew. He knew the exact moment when you would turn to him. He also knows the people who never will. We have such amazing assurance and also reassurance when we choose to follow God because he has always known us.

Can you even wrap your head around that? Before your parents decided, oh, maybe this is a good night to increase the size of our family. He knew you long before that.

Before they had plans, his plans were before that, long before. His love for us, like that knowledge, is endless and unconditional.

[25 : 19] Nothing, Vern talked this morning about we have infinite lives. As human beings, right now, we recognize that our days are numbered. And when he said, less in front of you than behind you, even I went, yes, I clutched my pearls a little bit.

But it's true. I have less time in front of me than I do behind. So this passage also emphasizes, and I mentioned this a bit ago, that salvation begins and ends with God's grace.

Remember, God's grace is extended to us. Salvation is available through God's grace. It's nothing we did. Remember me saying many times over the years, hey, guess what we deserve?

Death. And yet, by the amazing grace of God, God, we have eternal hope. It reminds us that God's purpose for people, his purpose for you and for me, wasn't some kind of afterthought.

It was settled and established, that as well, before the foundations of the world, before time as we know it, before you drew your first breath, before any of your ancestors drew their first breath.

[26 : 35] God knew them, God knew you. He's always known us. And ultimately, his wisdom and his power are supreme.

So knowing that God knows, and has always known, that he has power that we can't even begin to imagine, that is available to us, why do we try to struggle through this life on our own.

God will guide us, he will protect us, until the day when we stand in his presence. Then Paul asks this really powerful question, if God is for us, who can be against us?

The answer is clear here. No enemy, no accusation, no condemnation, can overturn what God has done through Christ for you and for me.

Because of Christ, our sins are forgiven. Our standing before God is secure. Our future is certain.

[27:52] In a world of judgment and insecurity and uncertainty, I like the alternative. So what's the practical application of that truth for us?

Friends, don't live under the weight and discouragement of condemnation. I have lots of conversations with people and sometimes even with myself in my own little head.

It's not that little, I guess. About how I don't deserve things, how I'm not good enough, how I fall short. That's not God's words for me.

I often say to myself and to others, and so take this with you today, if you are struggling, if your brain is chaotic and you're worried and your circumstances feel totally out of control, you feel unworthy, unaccepted, sidelined, any of those things, I want you to do this.

Stop. Be quiet. And ask God, how do you feel about me?

[29:04] And then be quiet and listen. Friends, rest in the finished work of Christ. Jesus himself said that his work for you and for me is finished.

It's accomplished. Trust him and believe that promise for you. And face life's challenges, as much as it might be hard sometimes, with confidence that all of God's promises are true.

Final point I want to leave you with today is that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Romans 8 wraps up with Paul making one of the greatest declarations assurance in the entire Bible.

He says, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? And then anticipating, as Paul so often does in his writing, anticipating a wave of negative responses, he cuts them right off at the pass. He lists every imaginable hardship. He talks about trouble and persecution and famine and danger and even death. He covers all those dangerous, scary bases.

[30:16] yet then he says that none of these things can separate believers from Christ's love. Instead, Paul declares in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Our victory isn't found in our strength, maybe you can say, oh yeah, I know, but it's found in God's unfailing love for us. So hear this, take it in, let God tattoo, and if you don't believe in tattooing, forgive the analogy, let God tattoo this on your heart.

Our security as believers doesn't rest in our ability to hold on to God, but in God's ability to hold on to us.

Paul finishes, as I said at the beginning, with this triumphant affirmation. It's one of the most powerful and comforting benedictions in all of Scripture. Neither death nor life, nor angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He will not let go of you. Puberty story. How can we apply that powerful truth in our own lives? Well, stand firm during trials.

[31:47] Don't run. You don't have to run. You're protected. Remember, then, that God's love is constant and unchanging. There's nothing you can do, you've heard this before, there's nothing you can do to make him love you more, and certainly nothing you can do to make him love you less.

Live with confidence hope and courage. The world will notice that you are different. As we've been reminded or even had clarified for us for the first time this morning, Romans 8, 26 to 39 teaches us those three powerful truths, and here's your three things to take away.

God helps us in our weakness. God secures our salvation, and nothing can separate us from his love. Friends, no matter what challenges we face, we can rest in the assurance that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, Christ advocates for us, and the Father's love surrounds us.

Worship team, you can come. Recognizing the important reality of all that, then we can live with faith and hope and confidence, knowing that through Jesus Christ we are indeed more than conquerors.