

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God

IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

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Victorious Love of God

I have two thoughts for 2017 that are on opposite ends of the spectrum—yet, they are complementary. One will get us through the other, without fail.

There are sinister forces at work and these will continue to manifest in the coming years until the anointing and the presence of the Lord come that usher in the kingdom of Christ—that is, when the heavenly kingdom takes root among the nations as Christ and His anointed ones (first fruits of humanity) lead the nations into all truth. Do not be deceived by the optimism and enthusiasm that a better world is coming under the rule of men that know how to work the world system. The love of money is still a root of all sorts of evil. Do not be deceived by the light of men, regardless of the label they wear or their sincerity. The only man who will not disappoint is the new creation man in glory. Deep darkness is upon the world—it is called *the darkest hour*. There is one thing that will not fail us through this darkest hour. It is more than simply avoiding failure—it is the way of an overwhelming victory. In this context, here is the specific verse that kept coming to me every time I inquired about a word for 2017.

Nay! in all these we are *more than conquering* through Him Who loves us. (Romans 8:37 CLV)

In this verse, Paul uses a Greek word that is not used in any other place in the Greek text. It is the word *hupernikao* [G5245] meaning "to vanquish beyond, gain a decisive victory, more than conquer," as implied by the prefix *hyper*. Depending on the translation, it is translated *more than conquering [conquerors]*, *overwhelming [complete] victory*, or *remaining completely victorious*.

This raises us to a dimension that far exceeds the need to conquer or overcome anything. This is profound, especially when we realize that Paul is telling us that those in Christ do not have to do anything to conquer, except to know that, because of God's love for us and because Jesus loves us through all that we face in life, we who are in Christ are completely victorious. We have an overwhelming victory because Christ is the Victor, and we are in Him in that same capacity. We are victors in Christ, and His love keeps us in His victory.

Putting this verse in context, Romans 8 is about the sons of God—the called, elect, saints who love God and are called according to *His* purpose who are destined to be conformed to the glorified image of Christ. In verse 35, Paul asks the question: *Who will separate us from the love of the anointed?* He answers it in verse 39 by declaring that nothing in all creation *will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. By extension, this means that nothing can separate us from Christ Himself; love binds us in the Victor and His victory.

To drive home the point, in verses 35, 38-39, Paul lists all the things that will attempt to separate us from the love of God in His Son. One commentator has called these the *great forces of the universe*. *Affliction, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Separate us? No way! Death, life, messengers, principalities, things being present, things about to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing? Never!*

Paul did not simply pull these two lists out of the air to make a point about God's love through His Son. No! Paul literally had firsthand experience of all these things. We could say these were all part of Paul's darkest hour, details of which he shared with the Corinthians: *I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false*

brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23-28 NASB).

It is with this personal experience of trial, even unto death, in mind that Paul made this most remarkable declaration about more than conquering. Stated another way, the darkest hour will never separate us from the love of God in the anointed Jesus. Absolutely nothing will separate us from God's love and the Son of God's love. If King Jesus is in you and you are in King Jesus, how can it be any other way? If God did not love us, He would be rejecting His Son—an impossibility. Note—Paul never states that God's love removes us from these great forces. No! God's love brings us through them in the victor, meaning we remain completely victorious regardless of the circumstances.

Paul does not tell us we need to conquer through love, even though there is an element of truth in this. But rather, he declares that in the love of God through His Son, we are beyond conquering—we are victorious.

For years, I have held to and written about the need to be conquerors, meaning there are things in life we conquer. To a degree this is true. John the apostle is the one who records the need to conquer. However, Paul goes far beyond this to a level not expressed by John. In all of his writings, Paul never exhorts ones marked out for sonship to be conquerors. They are not called to fight to be conquerors, to overcome, as many teach, but rather to be victors—ones who stand and rest in a victory that has already been attained by Christ through His love, for not only us but for all mankind and all creation. The victory is already won! There is no need to fight to attain it. To be even more emphatic, God's love was never in the battle in the first place, as if the outcome were ever in doubt. It was profoundly manifested in the cross of Calvary and the resurrection and ascension of God's Son.

This is the ***unconquerable love of God***. God's love is victory over all things, and this love has been shed abroad in our hearts through the holy spirit given to us. Love is in victory. To state this another way, ***love is unconquerable***, meaning it cannot be touched or moved or defeated in any way, shape, form or manner. It is far above all things that would stand against it. Nothing, absolutely nothing can nor ever will touch the ***unconquerable love*** of God expressed in, by, and through His Son.

When God's people experience the great forces of the universe in what could be called *their personal darkest hour*, they often think they did something wrong as if God is mad at them—they are being punished. However, if we have a clear conscious as Paul did and continually seek to be in God's will, nothing could be further from the truth. Mind you—it is true there is such a thing as the discipline of God, so this does not imply there is never any correction from God. In His love, God disciplines and corrects, but never does He seek to destroy. The fact of the matter is that through the very darkest hour, God reveals His deepest love for us in and through His Son, and this love stands victorious over all that we might go through, whether it is today or in the days and years to come.

Jesus' victory was never in doubt. He has conquered ALL. He is victorious over all. He has defeated sin and death and conquered the whole world system of man. ***I have overcome the world! It is done!*** We don't see it with our natural eyes, but be assured that to God in spirit it is a done deal. And, it is done in love. We are in a complete, overwhelming victory through Christ who loved and continues to love us.

May the eyes of our hearts be opened to see the victor and His victory, and to live out from Him in all things. He has conquered all in love, and we are now encouraged, even exhorted, to embrace His great victory of love. The called and chosen are now in the victor and His victory, meaning they are beyond conquering. Be assured—in the midst of deep darkness, God's love remains unconquerable.

God's love is overwhelmingly and completely victorious through His Son who loves us!