

Going for the Spiritual Gold:
Celebrate the Victory
Romans 8:26-39

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Text Introduction: For the last three weeks as the world's attention has focused on London and the Olympic Games, we have used these weeks to focus on "Going for the Gold Spiritually." We have discovered the urgency and necessity of becoming spiritual champions. We have uncovered the opponent in the battle. Uncovering the devices that Satan uses, we discovered in God's Word a strategy for becoming and remaining spiritual champions. Our series on spiritual champions ends today with the idea of "Celebrating the Victory." As believers in Christ, we ought to live in a continual sense of celebration.

In our text today, I sense that Paul pauses momentarily in his theological treatise of salvation for a declaration of praise. It is a wonderful text to recognize the reason for celebration as believers.

Text: ²⁶ In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. ²⁷ And He who searches the hearts knows the Spirit's mind-set, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things?

If God is for us, who is against us?

³² He did not even spare His own Son

but offered Him up for us all;

how will He not also with Him grant us everything?

³³ Who can bring an accusation against God's elect?

God is the One who justifies.

³⁴ Who is the one who condemns?

Christ Jesus is the One who died,

but even more, has been raised;

He also is at the right hand of God

and intercedes for us.

³⁵ Who can separate us from the love of Christ?

Can affliction or anguish or persecution

or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

³⁶ As it is written:

Because of You

we are being put to death all day long;
we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious
through Him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am persuaded that not even death or life,
angels or rulers,

things present or things to come, hostile powers,

³⁹ height or depth, or any other created thing

will have the power to separate us

from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Introduction: Legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi, once said, “When the battle is over and victory is yours, never, never fail to celebrate.” In sports, celebration is a common and appropriate response to victory. Tonight in London, there will be the parade of the nations again, speeches, music—all to celebrate the Olympic Games in what is called the Closing Ceremony.

Building off of our themes in recent weeks which have compared athletics to the Christian life, shouldn't we conclude that if something so temporary as a victory in an athletic contest should be celebrated, how much more should our ultimate victory in Christ be celebrated!

In these past weeks we have discovered the urgency and the necessity of becoming spiritual champions. We have uncovered the opponent in the battle and the devices Satan uses. We have concluded, though, that we can have victory in Christ. In short, then, since our victory is certain, as long as we live, **we should live a life of celebration.**

In Christ, we have victory!

Victory—Over What?

- **Victory over our Situations!**

God, in Christ, helps us in our weakness.

Not only do we have the promise that a better day is coming, we have the promise that God wants to help us right now. The weaker we are, the more help we will receive. How does He help us? One way is that He is interceding for us. I am going to warn you now, I don't think we can ever get our finite minds around this thought that God intercedes for us or prays for us. The first question might even be, “Why?” Why does the Spirit of God need to intercede for us? The simple answer is found in the context of this statement. First, the Spirit intercedes when we do not know what or how to pray. Second, He makes intercession according to the will of God. Here is the reminder that God knows better than we do what we need.

Thinking of this in human terms helps us to understand the significance of this promise. How does it make you feel when someone tells you that they will be praying for you? How much more would it mean to understand that the God of this universe is interceding for you!

God holds up His perfect will.

And what is His perfect will? God intends to conform us to the image of His perfect will. In the midst of our trials (our overwhelming moments of life), we need to be reminded that God is working all things together according to His purposes. What is His ultimate purpose for your life? Put simply—God’s greatest purpose is to conform us to the image of Jesus.

- **Victory over our Sin!**

Our victory over sin in Christ is the main point of the whole letter.

- Romans 1:16—For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.
- Romans 5:1—Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Romans 5:6—For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly.
- Romans 5:8—But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!
- Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And then, right here in the most immediate context of our main text this morning.

- Romans 8:1-3--Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, ²because the Spirit’s law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³What the law could not do since it was limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin’s domain, and as a sin offering,

Christ died not only to forgive us from our sin, but to free us from our sin. This is a victory that demands celebration.

Colin Chapman, in Case for Christianity, quotes Ugandan Bishop Festo Kivengere’s account of the 1973 execution of three men from his diocese:

The bishop recounts how he was allowed to speak to the condemned before they faced the firing squad. He did not know what to say. Soon, he realized that he would have to say nothing. Before he could utter a word, one of the men said, “Bishop, thank you for coming! I wanted to tell you that on the day of my arrest, I asked the LORD Jesus to forgive me of all my sins! He did and now Heaven is open, and there is nothing between me and my God! Please tell my wife and children that I am going to be with Jesus!” The other men told similar stories.

The next Sunday, the same bishop preached in the hometown of one of the men and recounted that story. When the pastor gave the testimony of the men he said that “There erupted a great song of praise to Jesus! Many turned to the Lord there!”

Celebration! Why? Victory! Over what? Over our situations and over our sin!

Victory—What Kind?

The psalm makes several important points about what kind of victory we have in Christ. Our victory is ...

- **Certain**—In athletics, we are always told to be careful not to celebrate too soon. We hear things like “It’s not over until it’s over.” In Christ, Go ahead and start celebrating. It’s over! The cross is empty. Christ’s work is complete! The tomb’s empty. The victory can begin.
- **Complete**—Our victory is also complete. It is a full victory.
- **Conquering**—We are more than victorious.

Our victory is illustrated by an empty tomb (v. 11), eternal promise (v. 18), and several unanswerable questions (v. 31-35)

Victory—So What?

If we have victory in Christ, then we ought to . . .

Live a life of Confidence

Live a life of Cleanliness

Live a life of Celebration

When I was in college, I was invited to attend an “Advance” sponsored by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I had been on retreats before, but I had never heard of an “Advance.” When I asked about the meaning of an “Advance,” my leader asked if I had ever been on a retreat. When I indicated that I had been on many retreats, my leader told me that an advance was like a retreat. My leader continued that Christians are never to retreat, but always to advance. As Christians, even when we go on a retreat, we do so in order to advance.

In London tonight, there will be one part of the celebration that has no place in our celebration as Christians. There will be the extinguishing of the flame signaling the end of the Olympics. We never need to extinguish the flame—for our celebration continues.

Do you live a life of celebration!