

Title: Arresting Joy Thieves

Text: Philippians 1.12-26

Theme: Living with assurance and joy

Series: Living the Cross-Centered Life, pt.

Prop Stmt. Staying near the cross keeps your life filled with security and joy even when your circumstances could dictate otherwise.

Read Text:

Several years ago I read the story about a man who was on the subway on his way home from work on the night before Thanksgiving. It was his company's practice to give turkeys to each employee and this year was no different. He sat there with this box on his lap looking forward to an extended weekend and time with his family. During the ride home he got into a conversation with a guy next to him, who was going through some really tough times. When it came time for them to part, the first guy insisted that the second man take the turkey. He wanted to be at least a little bit of encouragement to the man.

The following Monday, the man's co-workers seemed to be acting a little strange. Then finally, one of them asked him what he thought about the turkey. You see, they had played a trick on him and had replaced his with a rubber one as a prank. Of course, he had no idea they had done that, and now instead of being a help to the man he met on the subway, he knew that he had unintentionally been a source for more disappointment and there was nothing that he could do about it.

How do you respond when you are misunderstood and people assume they know your motives and intent (and they don't)? What can you do to defend yourself when people are talking about you behind your back?

One of the sad consequences of the fall is that people tend to be quick to believe the worst. Whisper campaigns are very effective. As soon as someone believes the worst about you, all of your actions are now interpreted in light of that filter. You are tried, found guilty and hung, all without ever being given a legitimate chance to explain.

You have been there. We all have. What do you do? Now, hold that thought for a minute because that is exactly the situation that the apostle Paul found himself in when writing Philippians. (explain)

Paul is not all that concerned about it, is he?

Why do some people live mired in problems while others, who have the same amount, perhaps even more problems, live above them?

What attracts us so much to Paul? Paul did what he calls us to do in 2.12; he worked out his salvation. His sanctification was a reflection of his justification. His practice and thinking as a believer reflected his position and standing as a believer. Paul knew that

there were more important issues that really mattered beyond what people happened to be saying about him at the moment. When you get that figured out, and when you train yourself to think about them, by cultivating a thinking process that reflects the gospel, you will find that it makes all the difference in the world.

The Puritan Pastor, Thomas Watson said, “Your sufferings are not so great as your sins: Put these two in the balances, and see which weighs heaviest.” Weigh your sins and your sufferings? Which weighs more? When you recognize that your sins are so much more than your sufferings, then you will truly understand that what you suffer (physically, relationally, etc) is never to the extent that you deserve.

This is the truth that Paul helps us come to grips with in the book of Romans. It is a truth that he obviously grasped in his own life, which is so powerfully demonstrated in chapter 8. This body has the seeds of death in it (v.10). Deteriorating physical processes are not a surprise, but an expectation. But, this dying condition is not permanent, my sonship is! Since my union with Christ is permanent, and the affects of sin are not, what is more important? (vs. 12-17) By position in Christ is the most important. But, being identified with Christ is a package deal. I get credit for his life, death, burial and resurrection – which we love. But, we should also expect to be treated with hostility by this world.

You are part of the creation that groans under the curse of sin. You are not an exception to the rule. But, instead of simply bearing up under it and gutting it out, and groaning your way through it, you have the Spirit who is groaning on your behalf. Not only do you have a personal advocate, you have a wise and sovereign God, who is at work in all of life’s details, turning thieves of your joy into the tools of your sanctification.

This gospel is so powerful (1.16-17) it can save to the uttermost. Spurgeon said about v.30 – “There is no stopping God.” The gospel is so powerful that I am kept by it all the way to the day of completion. (vs. 28-30)

The unbreakable links in the gospel chain lead to the 5 unanswerable questions in the remainder of the chapter. Which is another way of trying to explain that the gospel is completely sufficient to complete what God began. Since, God completes what He starts, I can live at rest. Since, I can live at rest and in security, I can have joy, because the source of my joy is not at risk.

The difficult challenge (and it is difficult) is this: How do I know in the middle of the storm (or jail) that God cares for me? How can I have joy on my journey or songs in the night when the providences of God seem to contradict the promises of God? The answer, I repeat is in the cross. Christ did not die on the cross to persuade God to love me, but because God does love me! If God gave this for you, will he quit on you now? Abraham’s son was spared, but not God’s. If you are going to understand God, you have to know that He lost His Son for you.

So, after laying down the reason for our confidence in the sovereign plan of God in our lives, Paul writes, What do we say to that? What do we say to the fact that God works

good in all things? What do we say in response to the fact that God guarantees our salvation. What is there to say? But instead of responding with what we might say, Paul goes on to explain what are some of the benefits of having a salvation that is guaranteed in Christ. It is not until the end of chapter 11, that Paul finally writes what is an appropriate response to these truths. But if what we have studied is not already enough fuel for our worship engines, these verses are high octane.

While verses 18-30 deal with how God is for us, verses 30-39 focus on the benefits of God being for us. In fact these verses help us to work out the implications of our beliefs. What Paul is doing here, is taking some of the practical parts of this doctrine that he has just covered and is challenging us to work these things out.

The big idea is this: God is For Us! He has already answered the why part of that statement. God is not for you, because you first decided that you were for God. God decided that He was for you, because He decided that in that absolute freedom that God alone has. He loved you because He chose to love you. God is For us. Now, based upon that great fact, here are five questions that Paul asks us.

1. If God is for us, who can be against us? The ultimate answer is - no one who will prosper.
2. If God already gave us His best, is He going to withhold anything else from us that we need? - No.
3. Who can lay a charge against that will stick? No one.
4. Who can condemn us? God is the only one who can condemn, so the answer is - no one, not even myself.
5. Who can separate us from the love of God?

Since God is for us:

1. No one can be against us and prosper.

The truth is, there can be many people against us. But is our security ever in danger?

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” Behind the specifics of these questions it is clear that believers have a personal enemy. The church is being built on enemy territory that we are rightfully claiming for the kingdom of Christ. But the enemy is constantly seeking to win that territory back. We know a lot of people that are against us. In fact in v.37 we read that for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of God we face death all day long and we are considered to be very expendable as far as the world is concerned. So, we concluded, rightfully so, that the promise that God is for us, does not mean that others will not be against us, it means that even though others may be against us, they will not be against us and prosper.

Since God is for us:

2. God will give us all things.

A. God will give us all things because He already gave us the greatest!

1) God did not spare His Son

One of the most powerful stories in all of Scripture is the story of Abraham and Isaac on Mt. Moriah as God tested the faith of Abraham by calling him to sacrifice the life of his son. As Abraham lifted the knife to kill his own son, God called to him to stop. The life of Isaac was spared.

But God did not spare His own Son. We often say that we killed Jesus in the sense that it was our sin that caused Him to die. And while that is true, it is probably more accurate to say, that it was the Father who killed him.

2) God gave Him up for us all.

Why would God kill His own Son. The only way God could spare us was if He did not spare His own Son.

Isaiah 53:5-6 But he was pierced for **our** transgressions, he was crushed for **our** iniquities; the punishment that brought **us** peace was upon him, and by his wounds **we** are healed. 6 **We** all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of **us** has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of **us** all.

So, here is the logic that Paul is teaching. It is an argument from the greater to the lesser. Since God is for us, He will give us all things that we need because He already gave us the most difficult part - Jesus.

B. God gives to us along with Christ.

God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit love to give. God loves to give to you. Say that, "God loves to give to me." How do I know that? The cross! God LOVES to give to me. Why? Because God is glorified in that. How. Because giving is part of the character of God and God loves to show off His character. He wants us to understand who He is. So God loves to give.

C. God gives to us graciously.

As if this promise is not already loaded enough, we are told that God gives graciously. I remind you that God does not give on the basis of what is fair. Nor does God simply not give punishment when it is due, because of Christ, but God loves to give what we do not deserve. God's grace is the basis of God's generosity. God loves to give and giving us all that we need is easy for God. Giving us all that we need is simple especially since God already gave us the best.

But we don't see it that way. We see the obstacles. We see the problems. We see the

“what-ifs.” There are no “what-ifs” with God. I come back to a question that I have been asking you again and again these last several weeks. Are you absolutely convinced in the goodness of God. Do you really believe that God loves to give.

I understand why Paul prayed this, and I want you to know that I pray this for you too.

Ephesians 3:16-19 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge -- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

But that brings us to the last part. Does God really give us all things? Listen very carefully because the previous phrase is very important to help us understand what is meant by this. I already mentioned that even though the text states,

Now, again, listen carefully. When God gives us all things, the all things are all the things that we need to successfully complete our journey in Christ. What has to happen to us in order to be glorified? Death. Did you know that death is part of the “all things” that God has given to us?

1 Corinthians 3:21-22 . . . All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future -- all are yours. . .”

That means that death is ours. But here is the key. I am quoting John Piper, “Death is ours - it will be given to us - not as a gift we can reject, but as a triumphant gateway to glory.” Nothing, even death itself will come into your life that will not be used by God for your good. Let me restate that in a positive way. God gives you all things for the purpose of benefiting you.

D. God gives to us everything that we need for this life and maturity.

God takes the enemies of our souls and thieves of our joy and turns them into the servants for our sanctification. Persevering faith is watching God take the enemies of our souls and the thieves of our joy and turn them into the servants of our growth, our good and His glory. But, since He did not spare His own son, which was the toughest thing to do, then you can bet your soul that He will graciously give you everything that you need.

Ephesians 3:16-19 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge -- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

In this text we are given a tremendous truth of hope. But in order to enjoy the benefits of this edge of the Spirit's sword, you have to accept the other edge of the sword as well. John Stott calls these the five unanswerable questions. And says about them, "The apostle hurls these questions out into space, as it were, defiantly, triumphantly, challenging any creature in heaven or earth or hell to answer them or to deny the truth that is contained in them. But there is no answer, for nobody and nothing can harm the redeemed people of God."

Do you remember the last question v. 32.

John Flavel, a Puritan pastor from 300 years ago asked, "How is it imaginable that God should withhold, after this, spirituals or temporals, from his people? How shall he not call them effectually, justify them freely, sanctify them thoroughly, and glorify them eternally? How shall he not clothe them, feed them, protect and deliver them? Surely if he would not spare this own Son one stroke, one tear, one groan, one sigh, one circumstance of misery, it can never be imagined that ever he should, after this, deny or withhold from his people, for whose sakes all this was suffered, any mercies, any comforts, any privilege, spiritual or temporal, which is good for them."

Each of these questions that are posed are based upon a truth. For example, in the first question, the truth is, God is for us, then the question - Who can be against us? There is no answer given because there is no one who can stand against those whom God has said I am for. The second question is based upon the truth that God already gave up His Son, Jesus Christ for our sins. So, based on the fact that God already gave us the best, is He going to hold anything back that we need? Again, no answer is immediately given, because the answer is obvious.

Question #3 - Who can level a charge that is going to stick? The language that Paul uses is that of a courtroom. In this verse God is presented as the Judge.

3. No one can level a charge against us that will stick. - This is the statement.

A. God does the choosing.

God chooses us, not on the basis of what we have done or what we are, but because of his mercy, God knows what He is going to make us to be. That is so thrilling. He who began a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Therefore, if God has chosen you to be his own, no one can level a charge against you that will stick.

When God chose you to be His own, he did so because of his mercy. Now, God was aware then of everything that you have done and will do. My sin does not surprise God. My sin does not please God. My sin grieves the heart of God and the Spirit of God. But in spite of all that I have done and will do, God has chosen to place His love upon me and you.

That is one of the reasons why some people resent God. He knows too much. He knows

everything. But in reality, that ought to be the basis of why we are driven to Him. Here is a God who knows me, who created me, who is not surprised by what I do and who yet in spite of that has said, “You’re mine!” When my conscience accuses me, when Satan accuses me of the contradictions between my claims and my life, then God says, “I already knew that!”

B. God does the justifying.

This verse also says that it is God who justifies. As we have seen over and over in the book of Romans, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, paid the penalty for your sin in full. When you personally accept that truth for yourself, God takes your sin and puts it on Christ’s account, which is paid in full, and He then takes Christ’s righteousness and places that on your account. Then God says, “I declare you on the basis of my son, to be righteous!”

Romans 8:34 - Christ has taken our condemnation

Romans connects the theological dots and draws a picture of complete believer. A growing believer is growing in joy in happiness and is decreasing in worry. How can you do that? Because your understanding of what is important grows and your understanding of what Christ has done for you regarding the most important issue in your life also continues to grow as well.

The essence of a life that is lived to please God is choosing to accept what God has said. This means that you have to know what God has said, and then you need to apply it. We are going to work on that this morning. I want to spend the first part of this message talking about what God has said, and then in the second part showing you how to work that out.

1. Do you know the Judge? - The theology - 34a

A. Only God has the right to condemn.

When katakrino is used of person to person (horizontal) it means to sentence to death. When katakrino is used by God to a person (vertical) it means to sentence to hell. It is true that Satan wants to damn your soul to hell, but he cannot do that. Only God has the ultimate right to condemn. Satan likes to try to imitate God and so he accuses us and condemns us, but his condemnations while formidable do not carry the day. Only God has the right to condemn, and our sin is the reason for our condemnation. But . . .

B. Only God can save you from being condemned. “Who is he that condemns?”

This next question provides its own answer. Paul asks if there is anyone in the universe who can condemn the genuine follower of Christ? Before he even allows space for a yes or no answer, Paul launches (like the previous question) into the theology that proves that

no such person can ultimately exist.

Revisit the prepositions: kata - against; huper - for

Exhibit A - Jesus Christ. What is so special about Jesus Christ, the text makes it very clear, lit. "Christ the One who died." or "Christ, the dead one." But hold on, because there is more to it than that. That is great, in the sense that the death of Christ already took our condemnation, but the story is not done. Christ is the One who died, but he also was raised from the dead. In fact, he was raised so much, he IS at the right hand of God, interceding FOR us.

1. He did this through Christ who died.
2. He did this through Christ who was raised back to life.

The death of Christ is certainly a critical and central event in the history of history. But what makes his death so important in addition to his perfect life is His resurrection. Notice the words, "more than that." The resurrection of Christ was the divine stamp of approval on his perfect life and substitutionary death. It is amazing to me how that otherwise seemingly intelligent people follow the teachings of dead people like Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young et.al. I serve a risen Savior, because His Word says so.

3. He did this through Christ who is at the right hand of God.

The right hand position is the place of highest honor in heaven. In Philippians 2 we read that God exalted Christ to the highest place. That highest place is at the Father's right hand. Please don't miss this important point. Hebrews 1:3 says that "after he had provided purification for sin, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." Ephesians 1:20 says that Christ is seated at "his right hand in the heavenly realms." Now, in Ephesians 2:6 we read, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." Colossians 3:1 says, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

Do you know what this means? God has put you into Christ. He views you within the realm, the dominion, the family of His Son. Your position, your value to Him based on Christ, is an honorable position. That position in Christ is the essence of who you are. Because your position in Christ has been established by God, accomplished by Christ, and sealed by the Spirit, there is no threat of condemnation that can change your status in Christ.

By the way, if you ever do a study on the furniture that is in the OT tabernacle and Temple there is one usual piece of furniture that is not there. Chairs! That is because there was no sitting in the temple. The priests were constantly working, constantly in the process of offering sacrifices or preparing to offer sacrifices or cleaning up from offering

sacrifices. But after Christ offered himself - He sat down!

4. He did this through Christ who is interceding for us.

2. Are you willing to trust His judgment? - The application

A. Trust His Judgment when your heart condemns you. - 1 John 2:20-21

Here is an issue that we struggle with on a regular basis. Every person here has some things in your life of which you are not pleased that are there. Some people have believed and taught that when we get to heaven, God is going to play on a large screen the entirety of our lives in order to show to everyone all the things that we did. The reality is that many of the accusations that we make against ourselves, or that Satan makes against us, or that others make against us are true. We all still sin, every single day. There are no supersaints here. We all have a ways to go. We are all on the journey. That is not an excuse to coast. If you coast, you're toast. But, even when a charge is leveled against us that is true, that charge will not result in our damnation.

B. Trust His Judgment when your world condemns you.

Let me lay out a typical scenario that we encounter. The biggest obstacle in our progressive sanctification is not Satan, it is sin. The problem is not demons, it is our mind. Is Satan real - yes! Are demons real - yes! But the way we are taught to deal with principalities and powers has more to do with what is going on up here (head) and here (heart) than what is going on out there.

For example, we are all tempted every day. When we think of temptation, we often think of some type of moral or sexual situation. But that is just one aspect of it. Eve was tempted, but the heart of the temptation was her disbelieving God. Adam did the same thing. When our hearts condemn us or when our world condemns us, it often has to do with our sin. What I have seen over and over is our sin in a "little" area often becomes the occasion for sin in a "larger" area.

The heart of temptation is this. A temptation offers you a promise that if you do this or think this, you will get what you don't have. The way that temptation is overcome is by already possessing what is promised. That is what you have in Christ - don't forget it.

Romans 8:35-39 - In all these things we overcome through Christ

Every day you live, you risk something. Every relationship on this earth is temporary. But what I want to challenge you with involves more than learning to love again or something like that. It is deeper than that. Your decision to love people is a direct reflection of your trust in God. Loving people can be tough and it usually carries a level of disappointment with it, but you and I are called to love our world and give of ourselves to the cause of Christ with total abandonment because there is One who can never be torn away from you.

We have looked at the first four of the five unanswerable questions.

1. If God is for us, who can be against us? The ultimate answer is - no one who will prosper.
2. If God already gave us His best, is He going to withhold anything else from us that we need? - No.
3. Who can lay a charge against that will stick? No one.
4. Who can condemn us? God is the only one who can condemn, so the answer is - no one, not even myself.
5. Who can separate us from the love of God?

This question in many ways summarizes all of these questions and summarizes all that Romans has been teaching up to this point. Brothers and sisters, if you are settled on this issue, you can face anything. If you are not settled on this issue, you are vulnerable to everything.

1. God's Love to the believer is guaranteed not to fail. - 35a

This fifth and final question is the exclamation point to the rest. What do we say in response to the fact that God is working in all things to carry out His divine purpose in my life and this world? What do I say? The only real appropriate response is to say, "Praise God!" But what Paul does is he applies some of these things to some specific problems that we encounter. There are times when we think that we are going to fail. We think that we are going to be defeated - but if God is for us, no one can be against us. There are times when we are tempted to believe that God is holding out on us. God is depriving us of something. But we saw that is not true either. We are vulnerable to the accusations of our world, but those can't stick. We are vulnerable to the threats of condemnation of our world also, but those won't stick. We are also threatened to doubt the love of God. We are especially tempted to doubt the love of God when we are facing difficult trials. That is why, when Paul asks back in v.31 - What do we say in response to this? What do we say in response to the fact that God is working in all things to carry out His divine purpose in my life and in this world, that we were especially vulnerable to doubting that truth in the midst of difficulties. As we are going to see, Paul is not only forcing us to think through the implications of this truth, he goes on to work out the implications of the implications. God really wants us to understand this.

2. God's Love to the believer does not guarantee an easy life. - v.35b

Becoming a follower of Christ does not mean that I am immune to difficulties or discouragements. I resent that unbiblical teaching that every difficulty is an attack from a demon that I have to resist through some secret weaponry or that a real spiritual person is not going to be sick. But, the reverse is actually true. Difficult times are not the exception for the believer they are the norm. We act surprised by suffering. We (myself included) wonder, where did this come from? Wait a minute, God's Love to me does not guarantee an easy life for me now. Folks, when is character seen? Character is forged

and seen under pressure. Anyone can be happy on a holiday. But who of us can be blessed when our enemies are persecuting us and saying all sorts of evil things about us? Who can rejoice and be exceedingly glad in the midst of that. You can, I can when I remember who loves me. But when tough times are part of my life, that is when I am tempted to doubt.

Brothers and sisters, that does happen. That happened to John the Baptist. Even Paul was discouraged. These words, breathed out, by the Holy Spirit through Paul were not written in a mechanical manner. Some of these words are the exact same words that Paul used to describe some of his own experiences and sufferings for the testimony of Christ. Don't doubt God's love even in the midst of tough times because His love does not guarantee an easy life. Notice the things that cannot separate us or divide us from Christ. He has already asked, can anyone put a distance between Christ's love and us? Can anyone or anything make Christ stop loving us? Now, he makes it personal.

A. Trouble -

General word meaning pressure from without, distress, anxiety, persecution - Acts 11:19; Suffering - Romans 5:3 It is the same word that Christ used in John 16:33 when he said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world." Trouble is part of the deal.

The follower of Christ experiences trouble now, yet has joy. The person without God, may not have, and may have trouble, but does not have joy. In addition to that, our trouble has an end.

B. Hardship - anguish, a narrow place where we are being squeezed (within and without)

C. Persecution - first three words overlap, being called bad for doing good is one of the most difficult times in a person's life. John the Baptist - was what I did and believed really true?

D. Famine - No food, starving.

E. Nakedness - word means extreme poverty, not having even the bare essentials for life.

F. Danger - Natural danger (storms etc.) and personal danger (robbers)

G. Sword - means dying in a violent manner, often at the hands of a tormentor.

Is it possible to experience these things and still be deeply loved by God? Yes. These things are bad. They are some of the results of living in a sin-cursed world. As bad as they are, they do not separate us from Christ's love.

3. God's Love to the believer does guarantee some tough times. v.36

Verse 36 is a quote from Psalm 44:22, in which it makes it clear that loyalty to God carries a price tag, because we are loyal to God in a world that is at war with him. Sheep are not prized animals. Sheep are actually rather stupid animals who are easily lead and easily intimidated and have a very difficult time solving their own problems. They are good for their wool and they are good to eat. Sheep are dispensable. We are labeled by

an unbelieving world as being dispensable. However, a person who truly believes what the Bible says is considered to be a really dangerous person.

Please do not forget this. The crucifixion of Christ was not a mistake in the sense that it was a misguided emotional response by some irrational leaders. The crucifixion of Christ was the planned, deliberate and calculated response by this world to the person and message of Christ. If Christ had waited 2,000 years and came today, the response would be the same. As followers of a hated and crucified leader, what are we to expect from our world?

Colossians 1:24 - "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church."

Now, here is the point that I really want you to grasp. You are never closer to the heart of God than when you suffer for the cause of Christ. You see, you are in Christ. When you suffer, Christ is there with you. Not only are not separated from Him in tough times, but if you are understanding what is truly going on, then you are made more aware of how close you really are to Him. When someone attacks you, he is attacking Christ. Before they attacked you, they spit on Jesus. Before they threatened you, they nailed Christ to the cross. That is why God said in Isaiah 43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, the flames will not set you ablaze." All of this speaks of the protection that God provides for his own, because he is with them.

The time of suffering is not over. The church has always been her finest when she has been the purest. Persecution purifies the church. God has never needed a large church, but God has always used a pure church. When God's people are persecuted and yet holy and committed, then there is much more accomplished than when we are comfortable, yet dull and lazy.

4. God's Love to the believer does guarantee victory (37-39)

No, these things do not separate us from the love of God because IN all these things we are more than conquerors, we are super-conquerors. Please take notice of the word IN. It is only IN these things do we realize how much we truly have in Christ. How many of you who have gone through the valley of the shadow of death have emerged to tell of God's grace? The victory that is promised to us means, that it is not even close! We win by such a large margin of victory the outcome is never in doubt.

A. We overcome because of what the troubles do for us.

Remember v.28, these troubles are part of what God uses to make us stronger and deeper.

B. We overcome because of what our reward will be.

We know that these afflictions as real as they are, are still light and momentary in contrast to the glory which will be revealed in us.

When Chrysostom was brought before the Roman Emperor, Emperor threatened him with banishment if he remained a Christian. Chrysostom replied, "You cannot banish me for this world is my father's house." "But I will kill you," said the Emperor. "No, you can't," said Chrysostom, "for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away your treasures." "No you can't because my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there." "But I will drive you away from man and you will have no friend left." "No, you can't because I have a friend in heaven from whom you cannot separate me. I defy you: for there is nothing that you can do to hurt me."