

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – June 9, 2020

That the Lord be with you.

How good are you at "awful-izing? What I mean is, are you anything like what I used to be when I was an awful-iser my mind was so creative and coming up with all the most awful things that could happen. I could read the news and awful-ize, I could lie in bed at night awful-ize. I used to tell people I got my exercise mountain climbing over bold hills. I could really identify with Mark Twain who said, I'm an old man now, and I've known many great troubles, but most of them never happened.

I awful-zed so much when I was a boy that my father would say to me, Timmy, 9 out of 10 of things you're worrying about, will never happen, but they didn't do it for me. It only left me worrying about what he said was a 1 in 10 that could happen but let me tell you something, that I discovered in that the Apostle Paul, he was an awful-iser.

I mean Paul was really good at imagining the most awful things that could happen to us, and then showing us how God's love trumps all the awful things. There was one particular passage of Paul wrote that really helps me today not to be an awful-iser. I'm looking at Romans chapter 8, where Paul has just confidently declared that God works all things together for good, for those who love Him. And then Paul does some awful-izing starting in verse 35, as Paul imagines the worse that could happen to you and me, to show us that God's love for us will make us victorious in every situation.

Verse 35, I read, who will separate us from the love of Christ, and then Paul starts imagining, awful-izing, he asks, will hardship or distress or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword. I think Paula known about COVID-19 he would have thrown that in. I don't think I could have come up with a better list of awful things that could happen to you and me, and then Paul asks, will any of these awful things ever separate us from God's loving care for us.

Quick comes Paul's answer. Know in all of these things to what things the most awful things. Know in all these things we are more than conquers, we're not just conquers, he says that just doesn't do it. Paul says, we are more the conquerors through Him who loved us. For I'm convinced that neither death, or life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I've taken my highlighter pen to this passage and I've marked it up. I've underlined the many things that might seemingly shatter our lives. It's all here. Hardship distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. It seems to me the Paul is pretty well covering his basis where anyone who had awful-ize, but just in case Paul has left anything out that is awful Paul throws in anything else in all creation or in this life or in the life to come.

And then quick comes Paul's answer. Nothing... Not one of these of us, things will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus Paul says, we are more than conquerors through

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Him who loved us.

Please notice the past tense of Paul's verb through him who loved us that past tense points us to the cross that is the proof of how much... How much God loves you and me. Paul says in Romans 5:8, but God proves His love for us. And then while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

So, Paul can awful-ize about all the things that might go wrong, in our lives, and He says, know in all these things, we are more than conquers through Him who loved us. A very literal translation of the Greek would be in all these things we are winning a most glorious victory through him who loved us.

The Greek is so expressive here all uses the word hyper-nikeoh. Hyper, you know the word means above beyond super huge. And then, nikeoh, it's where we get our word Nike from victory. And in all the awful things that might happen, things present, things to come. We are winning a most glorious a victory through him who loved us, that is our faith as followers of Jesus.

Now, have you ever known a versus scripture? Or maybe even memorized it and then something happens and it is like the Spirit of God speaks that verse to you and says this versus for you and you understand what the verse means.

Well that happened to me some years ago, it happened as I had just visited my late wife who was in the hospital for yet another round of chemotherapy for breast cancer, and I was just getting into the elevator and I see a poster in big words, it said I can cope and I read, I can cope. It was a support group for patients who had breast cancer, and for their families.

I read the sign, I can cope, I can cope. And it was like the spirit of God, took this passage of scripture and the spirit of God said, to me, gently, I can help you do more than cope. You can overwhelmingly conquer through him who loves you. Is there pain? Yes. Are there tears? Certainly. But through him who loved us, you and I, we are winning a most glorious victory through him who loved us. We are more than conquers, in whatever life throws at us. Now, with a lot of years of life behind me, I would go back to my dad, when he says, Timmy, 9 out of the 10 things you worry about will never happen. I could say to my dad that that's true and 9 out of the 10 things I ever worried about never did happen to me, but you know that 1 and 10, even that 1 and 10, I've learned that God makes us more than conquerors. Here is love scripture says, Not that we love God, but that He loves us and nothing will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

I pray for you now a prayer the apostle Paul prays for us in Ephesians 3, verses 18 and 19. Why not make it your prayer? I pray that you may have the power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ, that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim way.

Thank you for listening to next time...

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