

No Fear

Romans 8:31b-39

Introduction

In his first inaugural address, Franklin Roosevelt said: *The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.* He was talking about the way the Depression was making everyone afraid of the future. Life as we knew it was falling apart. Where could we go from here? He was sure we could overcome the troubles of the day if we would only let go of that fear, roll up our sleeves and do the work. All we had to be afraid of was the paralysis that irrational fear of the future brings. As irrational as it may be, fear of the future is real and very common. We fear the **future** because it's **unknown**. The monsters we can see in the daylight aren't nearly as scary as the ones under our bed at night. What are we afraid of? I can think of two things—judgment and evil. Because we're fallen, we fear being found guilty by God. We know the devil is very real and a threat to us in this life. In **Romans 8**, St. Paul addresses those fears and tells us why we don't need to be afraid.

(31-32)—Forgiveness in Christ

God will deal graciously with us because He *did not spare His own Son* (v. 32). This is what it means when we say that we are forgiven **for Christ's sake**. Our forgiveness is all on Christ. Because of His work on the cross, we're forgiven. We're reminded of this in **Confession** and **Absolution**. We access this forgiveness also in the **Sacrament of the Altar**. According to the *Small Catechism*, God gives *forgiveness of sins, life and salvation in the Sacrament*. If we are forgiven, we have nothing to fear when it comes to judgment. If it were up to us, we'd have everything to fear. Praise God, we're **forgiven for Christ's sake**.

(34)—Comfort in His Ascension

Not only are we forgiven for Christ's sake, He stands before the throne *interceding for us* (v. 34). That's why we don't pray to the saints. We have an intercessor and that is Christ Jesus (Read **1 Timothy 2:1-5**). Having Christ as our **Mediator** gives us **comfort** when it comes to knowing our sins are forgiven. That takes care of the first unknown.

(37)—More than Conquerors in Christ

But what about the fear of **evil**? Satan is powerful, more powerful than us. We don't stand a chance against him. If indeed, one had the opportunity to plead one's case before Satan as in Stephen Benét's *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, no one could win the argument. By ourselves, we haven't a leg to stand on before Satan. But Paul says here that we're *more than conquerors* through Christ. What does it mean to be **more than a conqueror**? Basil said, *He conquers who does not yield to those who lead on in force, but he is more than conqueror who voluntarily invites sorrows for a demonstration of his endurance*. We're not on the defensive, but on the offensive. This is what Christ is talking about when he says of the church, *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (**Matthew 16:18**). The church is to be actively aggressive, not passively defensive.

(38-39)—Safe in His Love

These last two verses state categorically that nothing can separate us from Christ's love. Nothing physical or spiritual, no power of man or Satan, no force in nature is stronger than our Lord, who keeps us in the palm of His hand.

Means of Grace

We rest assured of all this when we receive the body and blood of our Lord at Communion. He won all this for us by His death on the cross. By His resurrection, He has proved that His death is a victory, not a defeat. We partake of His crucified, risen body, in which lies all the victory. That's how we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are forgiven and are more than conquerors. His *perfect love casts out all fear* (**1 John 4:8**). Since He does away with these two unknowns, we have **no fear** in Christ.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
