



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ROMANS 1-8

Week 4

A Fresh Start

Romans 7:1-6

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever been locked into a contract or job you didn't like? What did it take for you to cancel the contract or end the job and gain a fresh start?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. This passage is based on a major legal principle—that death cancels contracts. Paul uses the example of marriage. In Hebrew law, if a woman's husband were still living, she could not marry again without being called an adulteress. However, if the husband died, she was free to marry again. Paul adapts this principle for the Christian life. Who will be our new husband? To whom are we to be linked?

2. Who was our old husband or Lord?

3. Who died, and in what way?

4. Read this passage from another translation or version of the Bible.

5. How do we die to the law, and what is the result of that death?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Do you feel married to the freedom found in Christ or are you married to a list of rules?

2. What does it mean to bear "fruit to God" (v. 4)? What fruit grows in your life?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The **weakness of the law** may be summed up this way: The law provided people with the knowledge of sin but did not give them what they then needed—a Savior to deliver them from the penalty and power of sin.*

Struggling with Sin

DAY 23

Romans 7:7-13

“Fix your thought more on the God you desire than on the sin you abhor,” wrote Walter Hilton (1340-1396). In this passage, where is Paul placing the greatest emphasis: on sin or on God?

1. In verse 7, Paul asks if the law is sin. What had he written earlier that might lead some to that conclusion (6:2; 7:4)?
2. Define the role of law. How does the law help (v. 7)? How is the law inadequate (v. 10)?
3. Notice all the sentences in which Paul uses the personal pronoun *I* and *me*.
4. Why would it be wrong to blame the law for our sinful behavior (v. 12)?

1. Describe how one sin can lead to other sins. Is this a logical consequence every time a person sins?
2. How does sin deceive (v. 11)? Has this happened to you?
3. In what ways do some people try to earn their salvation by adhering to a strict set of rules?
4. Are your relationships with family and friends based on rules, or on love? What kind of relationships are based on rules or contracts? What kind of relationship do you have with God?

Here Paul explores his own inner struggle with sin. Even though we are forgiven, and God counts us as righteous, there are times when we fail to behave according to the example of Christ, who lives his life within us. Paul makes two points in this passage: (1) the law is good because it makes us aware that there is a right and wrong; it helps us understand what sin is; it leads us to the conclusion that we are sinners; (2) the law is inadequate because it cannot provide the will and spiritual energy to do the right thing. Futility and despair results, as we realize the hopeless situation of being a slave to sin. Paul is leading us to hope and joy, but first he knows that we must realize how hopeless our situation is, apart from Jesus Christ.

OPENING

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DIGGING

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The Common Human Condition

Romans 7:14-25

OPENING
up to the Word

In this passage, Paul laments that he knows what is right, wants to do what is right, yet often chooses what is not right. At about the same time in history, Ovid, the Roman poet, wrote: “I see the better things, and I approve them, but I follow the worse.” Is this a dilemma you sometimes face?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. In 6:14, 18 and 22 Paul states that we are no longer slaves to sin. Yet in 7:14 he says he is a slave of sin. How would you explain this apparent contradiction?
2. Make a list of the negative statements Paul makes about himself, for example, “I am unspiritual” (v. 14). What point is he trying to make by saying these things about himself?
3. Can your agony and heartache over sin be a good thing? How (vs. 24-25)?
4. How are we rescued from the “body of death” (v. 24)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Look at your list of negative statements the apostle makes about himself. Which ones apply to you?
2. Can you think of a personal instance in which verse 15 could be applied to you?
3. Besides the common phrase *the devil made me do it*, what other excuses do people make for doing what they know is wrong? What excuses have you used?
4. In this section Paul is baring his soul for all to see and understand. This takes great courage and spiritual maturity. Where do you feel safest baring your soul—privately in a journal? To a spouse? With a small group? A counselor?

“But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

Romans 7:23-24



Living According to the

Spirit

Paul talked about the law being unable to produce righteousness because of the weakness of the flesh (Ro 8:3). However, this should not be interpreted to mean that he thought little of the law of Moses. The positive moral

behavior legislated by the old covenant is not terminated by the new covenant—rather, as the new covenant explains, new men and women in Christ are empowered to follow him.

Turn from evil to good.

Romans 12:2, 9

Seek love.

1 Corinthians 13

Don't misuse liberty.

Galatians 5:13-16

Choose to do good toward others.

Galatians 6:10

Live with a new, godly lifestyle.

Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:1-3

Learn how to serve others in humility, with love.

Philippians 2:1-7

Undo patterns of sin within ourselves.

Colossians 3:5-11

Develop godly contentment with what we have.

1 Timothy 6:6-11

A Second Chance

DAY 25

Romans 8:1-4

Think of a time when you were given a second chance—an opportunity to begin again. How did this happen and how did you feel when the opportunity presented itself?

1. Verse 1 is a conclusion to Paul's entire discussion beginning with chapter 3 up to this point. "*Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" Take a minute to let those words sink in. If you have accepted Christ, you are 100% free of sin and guilt.

2. Contrast the "law of the Spirit" with the "law of sin and death" (v. 2).

3. In what "likeness" did God send his Son (v. 3)? What did he send him to do? Why did he send him to do it (v. 4)?

1. If someone came to you feeling guilty and remorseful about past actions, what reassurance could you provide based on these verses?

2. Where have you experienced the power of God's Spirit in helping you deal with some sin or failure in your life?

3. In light of this passage, how is this statement from Martin Luther true: "*A Christian is the most free of all, and subject to none; a Christian is the most dutiful servant of all, subject to everyone*"?

*The life-giving Spirit (v. 2) is **God the Holy Spirit**. According to Genesis 1:2 the same Spirit was present at the creation of the world and He is now living within us. For more on the Holy Spirit look up John 3:6; Acts 1:3-4; 5:1-5. Look up Holy Spirit in a Bible dictionary.*

OPENING

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Living By The Spirit

Romans 8:5-11

OPENING
up to the Word

Think back to the time when you first came to Christ. Do you recall a change in your motivation, your interests, and how you were driven to do what you do? Did the change occur gradually or suddenly—or is it still occurring?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper. Use one side to list the results of living in accord with a sinful nature. Use the other side to list the results of living in accord with the Spirit.

2. Describe a “sinful mind” (v. 7). How does it speak, think and act?

3. Verse 10 says that if Christ is in us, our “spirit is alive because of *righteousness*.” Whose righteousness is this speaking of—our own or that of Christ?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What controls your thinking, speaking and acting the most: a sinful nature or the Holy Spirit? Explain.

2. How do *you* experience Christ living in you and through you?

WINDOW
on the Word

*As Christians we are **controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit** (v. 9). Christ-followers live in a different realm. Just as fish live in water and birds fly in the air, Christians live in the Spirit. If we fail or sin, we can confess, experience forgiveness and continue moving forward, knowing that there is no condemnation for those who believe in Jesus Christ (v. 1).*

God's Children, Not Slaves to Fear

DAY 27

Romans 8:12-17

The word *slave* is used in this passage; so is the phrase *sons of God*. In what way are Christians both slaves (6:22) and sons of God?

1. What is the obligation of a Christian (v. 12)? What is the result of living by a sinful nature?
2. Verse 15 refers to the "Spirit of sonship." What are the benefits of being a child of God (v. 17)?
3. What two things do we share, as co-heirs with Christ (v. 17)?

1. Has there been a time when you were a slave to fear (v. 15) even though you were a Christian? How did you deal with that issue? What did you learn from it that could help you in the future?
2. Think about verse 17 in light of these common expressions: *No pain, no gain. No guts, no glory.*
3. Have there been ways you have suffered for being a Christian? Was there any glory (honor or reward) that came out of that suffering?

Spirit of sonship (v. 15) is translated "spirit of adoption" in several other versions of the Bible. By using this phrase, Paul is drawing from Roman law. An adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate child in his new family. That child became an heir to the new parent's estate. Even if other children were born, their status did not affect the rights of the child who was adopted. Paul uses this analogy to stress that God has adopted us into his own family, guaranteeing a wonderful inheritance for us.

OPENING

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DIGGING

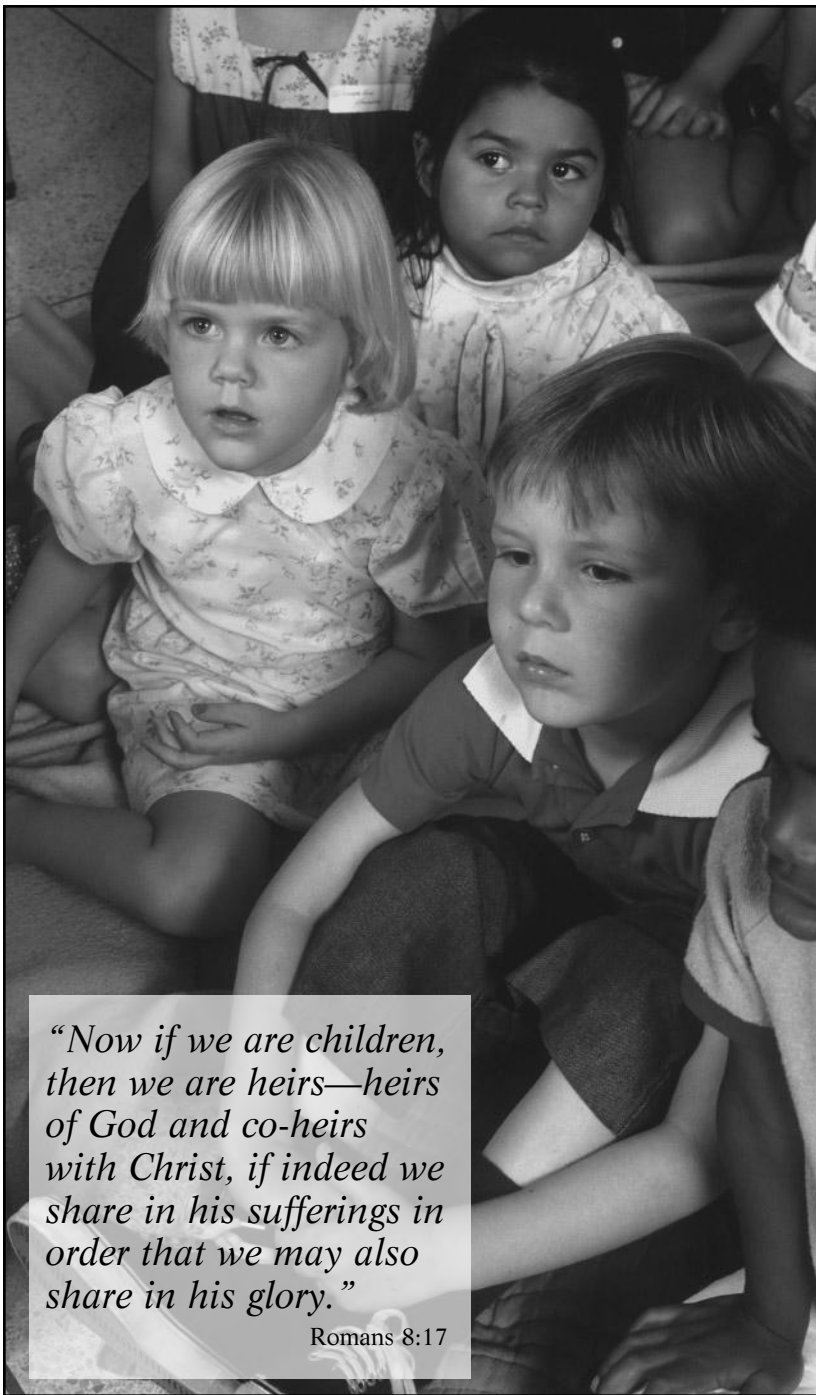
into the Word

LIVING

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*“Now if we are children,
then we are heirs—heirs
of God and co-heirs
with Christ, if indeed we
share in his sufferings in
order that we may also
share in his glory.”*

Romans 8:17

Glorious Hope!

DAY 28

Romans 8:18-25

Try this simple exercise: Whenever you see the word *hope* in the Bible, mentally substitute it with the word *faith*. Biblical hope is not just wishful thought, but a confident belief in a good future.

1. What “present sufferings” might the apostle have been experiencing (v. 18)? What did he mean by the “glory that will be revealed”?

2. When Paul uses the term *creation*, to what is he referring (v. 19)? What is the creation waiting for?

3. What does the apostle say about hope, and how does it bear on the Christian life?

1. What makes you *groan* about the injustices of this world (v. 23)? How does your faith help you deal with those issues?

2. How has your hope in God and Christ helped you through a difficult time?

3. Based on this passage, would you say Paul was an optimist, pessimist or realist when it came to the world and humanity? How about you—are you optimistic, pessimistic or realistic about your future?

When he writes “*creation waits in eager expectation*” (v. 22), Paul says that Christians see the world as it is—affected by sin. However, Christians are not pessimistic because they live and work in the faith that God is creating a new heaven and a new earth. Thus, they eagerly wait for God’s new order to emerge. In the meantime, Christians work to eliminate evil and injustice wherever they can.

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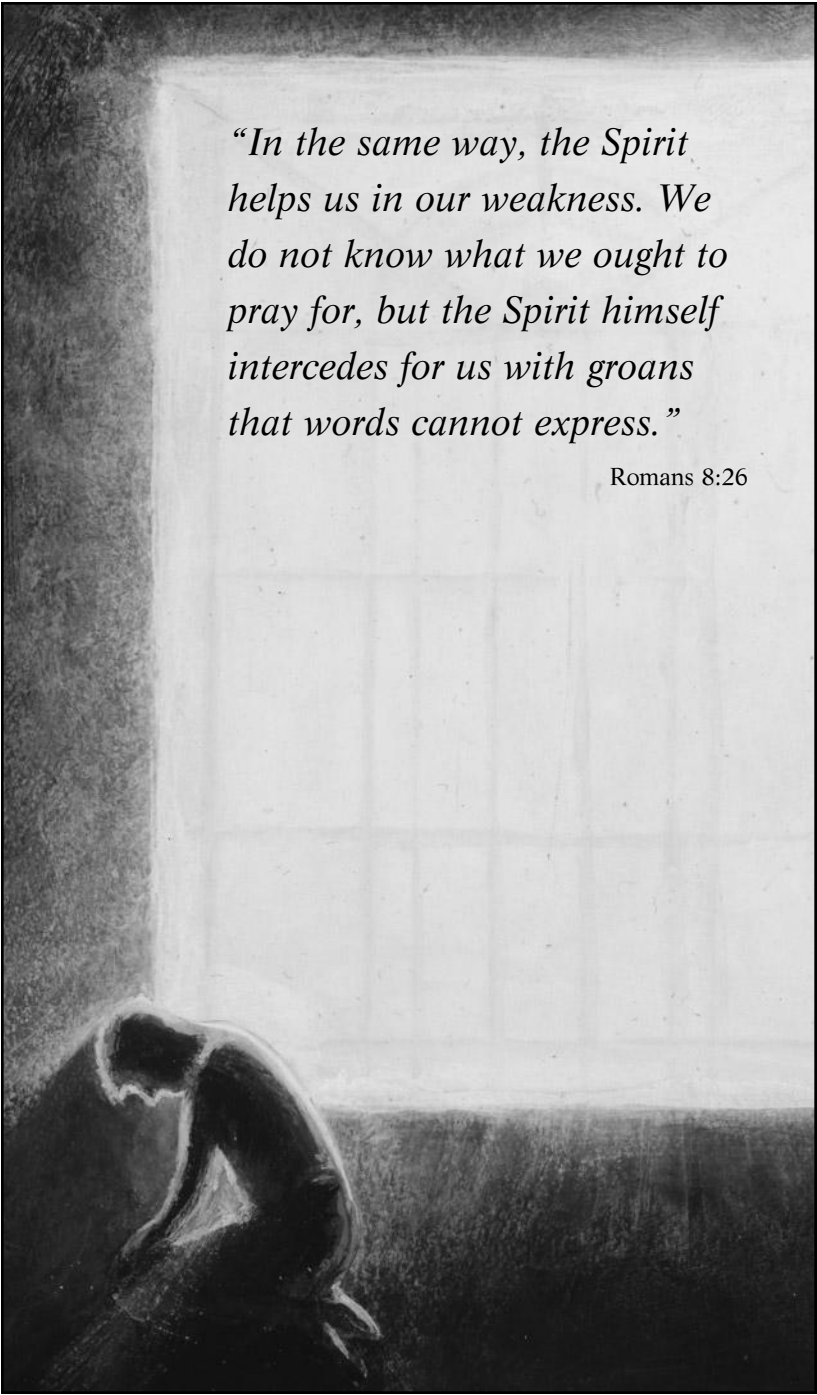
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LIVING

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A black and white illustration of a person kneeling in prayer by a window. The person is in the lower-left foreground, their head bowed and hands clasped. The window is a large, multi-paned window in the background, through which light is streaming, creating a bright, hazy atmosphere. The room is dark, with the light from the window illuminating the person and the window frame. The overall mood is one of quiet contemplation and spiritual seeking.

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”

Romans 8:26

An Invisible Means of Support

DAY 29

Romans 8:26-30

P.T. Forsyth wrote: “But at last it is truer to say that we live the Christian life in order to pray than that we pray in order to live the Christian life.” Do you agree?

1. Paul reminds us we are not alone in the universe. There is an invisible means of support for us. How does God, through the Spirit, help us (v. 26)?
 2. What does this passage reveal about the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 27)?
 3. Which verse clearly shows that our lives are not controlled by impersonal forces such as chance, luck or fate?
 4. What has God planned for us to become? Is this merely a hope for the future, or also a guide for the way we live today?
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1. Describe a time when you simply didn't know how to pray or what to pray. How was that issue resolved for you?
 2. Which verse in this passage is most meaningful to you and why?
 3. How have you experienced God working good things out of bad events in your life?
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In this section the apostle reminds us there are times when “we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us” (v. 26). Try to keep this in mind for a future moment when life sends you a major trauma and you are unable to form the words for a prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for you. Then trust that God will always do what is best for you.

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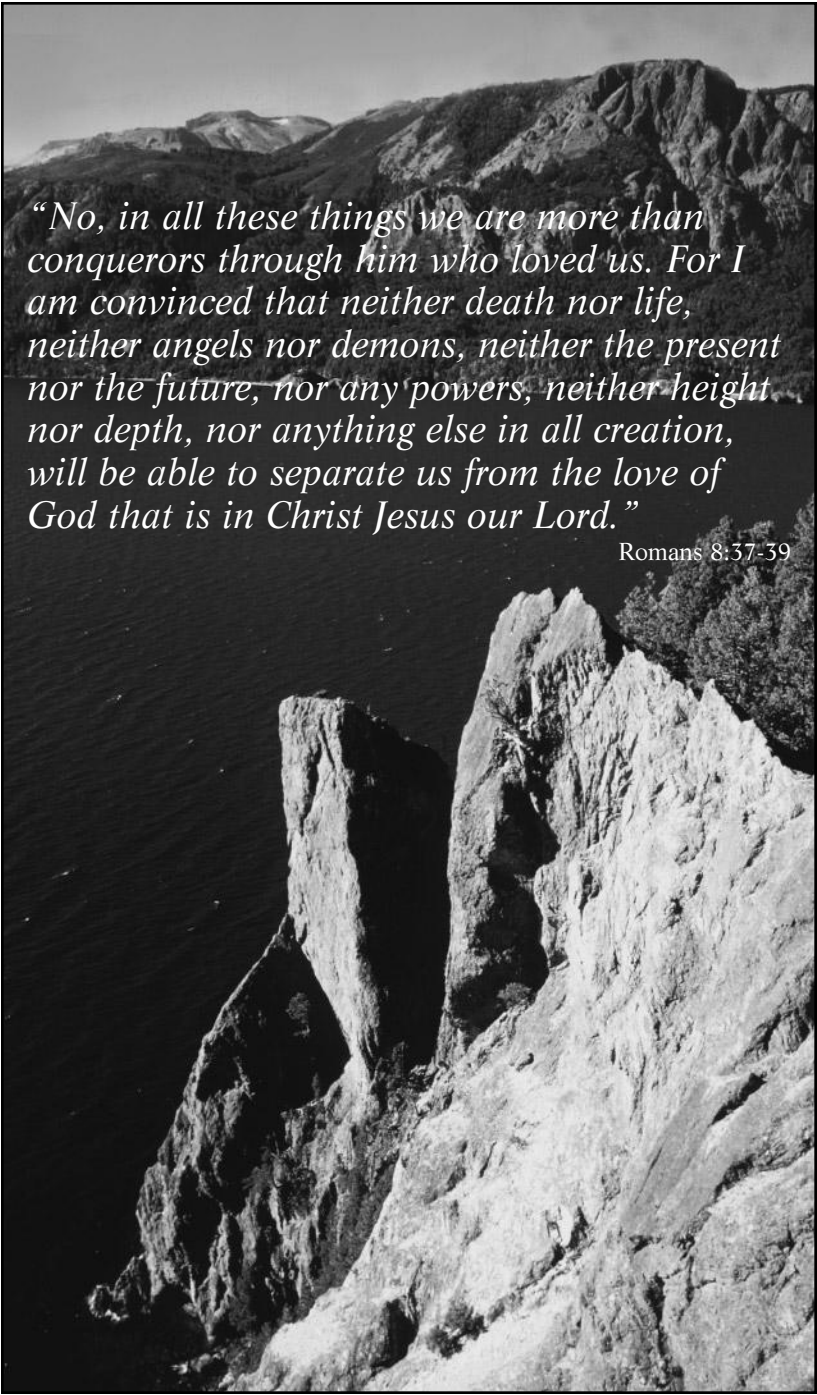
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LIVING

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“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:37-39

We Shall Overcome

DAY 30

Romans 8:31-39

Reflect on this wisdom: "The Holy Spirit longs to reveal to you the deeper things of God. He longs to love through you. He longs to work through you. Through the blessed Holy Spirit you may have: strength for every duty, wisdom for every problem, comfort in every sorrow, joy in His overflowing service." —*T. J. Bach*

1. Notice all the life issues cited by the apostle that cannot stop the flow of God's love.

2. If all you knew about the Bible came from this small section, what would you know about God?

1. Highlight the verse in this section that you feel is most applicable to your life right now. Explain your choice.

2. Of the opposing forces listed by Paul, which ones are a big issue for you?

3. Rewrite verses 35-39 in your own words and include things from your own experience. For example: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall divorce or bankruptcy or....*

When Paul writes about **persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword**, he was writing to a church that would soon experience massive persecution. What may have seemed to the original audience to be merely a hypothetical listing would soon become a painful reality, not only for them but for Paul, too. It is likely that persecuted Christians would recall Paul's glorious insight that "we are more than conquerors" and that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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