

# Nothing can defeat God's plans for us

(A sermon outline)

## A. Why me? What might have been?

1. In baseball, the "Shot Heard 'Round the World" was the crack of a bat in the 1951 National League pennant. The series was tied. It was the final game, the bottom of the ninth. New York Giants outfielder and third baseman Bobby Thomson was up to bat. He hit a home run off Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Ralph Branca to win the game and the pennant! After the game, Ralph Branca (the pitcher) pounded the locker room wall with his fist. He was devastated. When he left the locker room, he was met by his fiancé and a priest. The priest said to him: "Ralph, this can happen to anyone." Ralph: "But why did it happen to me?"
2. On November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was shot in Dallas. What would have happened if Lee Harvey Oswald has missed?
3. In 79 AD Mount Vesuvius blew up, destroying the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The famous Roman historian, Pliny the Elder, was killed by the poisonous gas, along with thousands of others. But his equally famous son, Pliny the Younger, was spared.
4. On September 11, 2001, many went to work in the Twin Towers in New York City and several thousand died that day. But some had not gone to the office as usual. They were home or elsewhere for various reasons that day and were spared.

## B. Like a bolt from the blue.

1. "Of all sad words by tongue or pen, The saddest are these: 'It might have been!'" (John Greenleaf Whittier, "Maude Muller," 1856)
2. "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the road less traveled by, and that made all the difference." (Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," 1915)
3. "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." (Robert Burns, "To a Mouse," 1785)
4. How do we find our bearings? Many in our day, as in ancient times, turn to astrology, horoscopes. What do we have to stand on? Count on? What is a sure foundation? On the one hand, there is the quip: "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans," which is based on the old Yiddish proverb, "We plan, God laughs." On the other hand, there is Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

## C. Romans 8:31-39 is the dramatic conclusion of Romans 1-8. What is the context of this dramatic "eschatological" conclusion, this summary of what we live by?

1. 1: 16-17: "The gospel is the power of God for salvation."
2. 1:20-3:20: Our predicament. 3:11: "No one is righteous, no not one."
3. 3:21-29: What God has done.
4. Chapter 4: Abraham 4:5. "trusts in him who justifies the ungodly."
5. Chapter 5: Free from sin.
6. Chapter 6: Free from death.
7. Chapter 7: Free from law. 1 Cor 15:56: "The sting of **death** is sin, and the power of **sin** is the **law**."

D. Chapter 8: **How much more...!**

1. 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." What shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us?
2. 8:32: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not [obviously] also give us all things with him?" Also, Matt. 7:10: "Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If then, you who are evil, know how to give good to your children, **how much more** will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! **How much more?**"
3. 8:33 Who can bring any charge against God's elect? (This is the same as 31b: "If God is for us, who is against us?")
4. 8:34: "Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us." He is praying for us.
5. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Followed by the list of seven items, all the kinds of terror in their time: "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" As Psalm 44:22 reads: "For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."
6. God does it. "No, in all these things **we are more than conquerors** through him who loved us." Wow! "For I am sure...." "For I am persuaded...." The Greek tense of the verb here is important: The perfect passive tense means that God does this and continues to do it for us. This is best illustrated by Gal 4:9: "know that you have come to know God, or rather **to be known by God....**" Compare Phil 3:12b: "I press on to make it my own, because **Christ Jesus has made me his own.**"
7. 8:38-39: "For I am sure (persuaded) that neither death nor life (whether we live or die we shall not be separated), nor angels, nor principalities, ... nor powers, nor height, nor depth (technical pair referring to astrology), nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing can separate us from Christ or defeat God's plans for us. To which we add "Amen."