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Kenny Hart, Lead Pastor, The Gathering

Yeah, Amen. Amen. How are you all feeling family? Are you alright? You all good?

Well, I want to send love and greetings all the way from Harlem, New York. Any New Yorkers in the house? Okay, two people. Love and greetings from The Gathering, from Harlem, New York.

You guys don't know this but your generosity to this church is touching people you won't meet until you get to heaven. I mean, you're changing lives all around the world, including Harlem, even if you've never been there. So can you give yourselves some love? Yeah.

And before I start, I just want to give a shout out to the 3,500 campuses that you guys have. I mean, I wasn't even going to try to memorize them because I don't even remember what I said at 9:00 a.m. Shout out to you all and to everybody watching online. We love you and we're glad you're tuning in.

I just want to say this. What God is doing here isn't normal. And I hope that you guys understand that and don't take it for granted. I've seen normal. I've been in church for a while over the past little while and I've seen normal. This is not normal.

And do you know what else is not normal? Your pastor. I just love Pastor Aaron, not only is he an amazing friend but he's also one of the humblest leaders of the move of God at this scale that the kingdom has seen in a long time. So you all give your pastor some love. Yeah.

So, I'm excited today. I see I'm stretching because I'm ready to go. You know I'm always fired up. And it doesn't help that I've got a Red Bull in me. So we're really going to get it in.

Today I've been tasked with the job of closing this amazing series that you've been in as a church. Has this series been blessing anybody in the house? Has it blessed anybody? Yeah. Amen.

Well today's passage is the crescendo of Romans 8. And Romans 8 is one of the most incredible passages in the entire Bible. This chapter is so great because within 39 verses Paul flexes—the Apostle Paul flexes his theological muscle and his intellectual acumen. He just flexes them.

I mean he covers some of life's most important questions. He talks about guilt and condemnation. He talks about shame and grace. He articulates the battle between flesh and spirit. I know ain't nobody in here battling flesh and spirit.

And he even finds time to talk about pain and suffering and how it's all working together for the glory of God and for the good of his people. Talk about creative genius. I mean, Paul must have had a couple of Red Bulls when he wrote Romans, chapter 8.

But with all of those incredible themes that he covers, the Apostle Paul has one last truth to communicate to us before we end this chapter. And what he says is so important that it can literally change your life today if you can internalize it and get it in your spirit.

He says—the truth simply is this, because of all that Jesus has done, we are now more than conquerors. Yeah. Yeah. If you're more than a conqueror you better let him know. If you walk away from this chapter thinking about how you don't measure up, and all of the ways that you fall short, and all of the things that you lack—then you've missed the point of the last four weeks. You've just missed it. You've got to go back and listen to the sermons again, because you've missed it.

The point of Romans, chapter 8 isn't how you are less than, the point is how Jesus is greater than. Yeah, yeah, yeah—this chapter isn't about your shortage, it's about how Jesus is your supply. Oh, yeah. I came to preach. Which means if you're going to walk out of this place and out of this series as more than a conqueror, as more than a conqueror—free from guilt, delivered from shame, whole and in purpose then there are a few things that you're going to have to be clear on before we end today.

That brings me to my first point:

Check your jersey.

Check your jersey. Life's a lot like a game, isn't it? And in every game, there are two sides. And life on a spiritual level is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. But even on a physical, natural level there are always sides. There are republicans and democrats, there's Apple and Android, there's Uber and Lyft, there's Knicks and Pacers.

Stop laughing at my Knicks. Stop laughing at my Knicks. We didn't get Zion but we're coming back. Pray for me. I might need a therapist.

But the one way to really know what team somebody is really on is to check his jersey. And I believe that God is saying to somebody in this place, or maybe somebody watching online—it's time to check your jersey.

You've been coming to church for a while, you've been serving, you've been giving, you've been praying, you've been listening to sermons and singing songs of worship—

but you haven't really checked your Jersey in a long time. You've been having a lot of activity for the Lord but not a lot of intimacy with him.

And the Lord wants somebody in here to check his jersey, because there are benefits to wearing the right jersey but there are consequences to wearing the wrong one.

Our passage today begins, "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

Paul says that if God is for you who can be against you? Did you hear what I just said? If God is for you who can be against you? In other words, if you're on God's team it doesn't matter who is on the other team. If you're on God's team it doesn't matter who is opposing you, which means the real question today isn't who's on your team, the real question is whose team are you on? Yeah.

There's a story in the book of Joshua that is one of my favorite stories in the Bible because it's hilarious to me. It paints this picture perfectly. One day Joshua was preparing to fight one of the biggest and baddest cities at the time, Jericho.

And as Joshua is circling the land and walking through the camp of Israel and figuring out his battle plan and strategy, all of a sudden, he walks up and he sees some stranger standing there with a sword drawn.

And you know, Joshua hasn't been in church that long, so he didn't know what to do with that. And Joshua had to pass him. He had a little something, something on him—but I'm just looking for the real section. Where's the real section at? I've just got to find the real section.

Joshua was a part of that real section. He hadn't been saved that long and so he literally steps up to this stranger with his sword drawn and said, "Are you a friend or foe?"

I can't make that up. That's in the Bible you all. Now those of us with a pass know that question can either start something or end something. Again, I'm just looking for the real section. Where's the real section at? Those of us with a pass know that that question, by default, establishes sides.

And the man with the sword looked at Joshua and said: Wrong question, bro. Neither. Now, that's when you know—don't mess with that person. When you are like, "Are you a friend or foe," and they are like, "Neither." That ain't one person to mess with.

He said neither, "I am the commander of the Lord's army."

See, Joshua asked the wrong question. And if we're honest today, we ask the wrong questions all of the time. You know my questions isn't is God on my side, the right

question is am I on God's side? Is this God's side of this issue? Is this God's perspective of this problem.

I know he's got abs, but is he God's will for me? Why the ladies got quiet. I know she looks good but just because she looks good doesn't mean that she is good. I know not nobody going to help me today, preach, I know. I know they pay well, but is this in my calling or is it a compromise? Because you know you can't get purpose from a paycheck, right?

See when you get alignment with God's perspective on something, you unlock advantages in your life. That's why Paul says if God is for me, who can stand against me? You all ain't hearing me in the back. I said if God is for you, who can stand against you?

See, people can come against you, but they can't stand against you. Did you hear what the text said? They can come at you, but they can't stand against you. Meaning when you've got the right jersey on, you don't need the odds to be in your favor to experience favor. Oh, my God! You don't need to know how God is going to do it, you just need the faith to believe *that* God is going to do it.

See, God is looking for people with faith because the Bible is clear, without faith it is impossible to please God. See, all of the activity that you are doing that is religious, you can't even start to please God without faith. Who am I preaching to?

See, when you have the right jersey on, you don't need to know why your momma got cancer and you don't need to know why your daddy was physically present but emotionally absent and you don't need to know why your husband doesn't pay you any attention and why your kids disrespect you.

All you need to know is that God is for you. And what that means is, because he is for you everything coming against you is not meant to destroy you, it's meant to develop you.

"Well, Pastor K, that's great in theory and I understand what you are trying to say, and I get your energy, I'm with it, but like how do I really know that God is for me? I have a past. I've made mistakes. Even now I don't like the person that I am. How do I really know that God is for me?"

Well, Paul tells you. It has nothing to do with you. Paul says, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

Did you hear what he said? If God sacrificed Jesus just so that he can love you, bless you, and be in relationship with you—why do you think that he does not want to graciously give you all things.

See, some of you think that beating yourself up looks better than grace. Some of you are spending so much of your time trying to pay for things that Jesus already paid for. If God is for you, what makes you think he doesn't want to graciously give you all things?

But what's all things? It's not the things that we want. See that's what messes us up. Somebody is like, pass the cake, all things! Okay, Jesus, all things. I'm taking that to the Lord in faith—all things, all things, all things.

No all things aren't the things that you want, they are the things that you need. See you need forgiveness. You need affirmation. You need love. You need grace. And God wants to give you all of those things, because they are in line with the plan of God for your life.

In fact, you could probably say it this way, because I like to give you multiple ways to think of this. You could say it this way:

Everything you need for victory in this season of your life is within your reach.

Did you hear me? And here's the beautiful thing about God. He always puts it into your reach, but never within your hand. See some of us want God to hand us our miracle. But when you look at the Scriptures, nobody—nobody get's a miracle passively. You have to be a participant in your breakthrough. Who am I preaching to? You have to be a participant in what God wants to do in your life, so he puts it in your reach, but never in your hand.

Here's the good news. If you don't need it, no matter how much you reach for it, you'll never be able to attain it. That's Amen, ouch. But here's why that is good news. That's going to set somebody free today, because you've been reaching and grabbing for all of these things: affirmation, love, acceptance, power—you've been reaching and grabbing for all of these things and Jesus is saying that everything that you need for victory is in your reach and not within your hand and if you don't need it you won't have it.

So your prayers in this season shouldn't be, "God, why?" Your prayers in this season, "God, is this necessary? God, if it's not necessary take it out of my life. God, if it's not necessary, close this window to open a door."

Which leads me to my second point. The next thing you need to do if you are going to leave here today more than a conqueror is:

Confront condemnation.

You have to confront condemnation. The next verses say, "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God," who is it who justifies? God! "It is God who justifies."

See, what the enemy aka the Devil aka Satan aka Lucifer aka the father of lies—what he wants to bring against you is charges. Why did I name all of his names? Because you

need to know your enemy. Some of you only know the Devil by one name, but the Devil doesn't just come in one form, one type. He was a snake in Genesis. He's a dragon in Revelation. He's a lion in different parts of the Bible.

You need to understand, because some of you are fighting with your flesh when you need to be fighting with your spirit. Some of you think you're going to overcome with your fighting by getting more power, but Jesus is saying that you need more prayer. Some of these things that you are fighting only come out through fasting and prayer. Who am I preaching to?

See you have to know all of the names of the enemy because you have to know all of the parts that you fight on. See, Satan wants to bring reminders that discourage you even though God has chosen you. But God's grace takes those accusations and says, "You don't justify me." Did you hear me? People don't justify you. I don't even justify you.

God justifies me, grace justifies me, mercy justifies me, forgiveness justifies me, reconciliation justifies me. I don't need to prove myself to you or anybody else. God justifies my call. God justifies my vision. God justifies my purpose.

Does anybody in this house know that it is God who gives you the blessing that you need? See, see, see, see, see—here's why this is important. When you understand deep down in your heart that you have God's justification, you unplug from the performance matrix.

See, some of us are so plugged into the performance matrix we don't even know it. Just plugged into... It's like a fish in water. You don't even know you're in the water. You're so plugged into the performance matrix, but when you understand the grace of God you unplug, which means you love people but don't need them. It means that you appreciate your work, but you don't worship it. It means you love your family and friends, but you are set free from the unrealistic expectations that they put on you. I know I'm preaching to somebody on that one. Somebody bought that in here. Amen. I brought that Amen.

When God has chose you, justified you, cleansed you, washed you—you don't have to do nothing, say nothing, prove nothing, defend nothing. You didn't apply for the position of child of God. You were chosen for it.

You think I applied to be a preacher of the gospel? Trust me. I didn't. I did not put my resume in and say, "Check out your boy. I've got the credentials." Trust and believe, this was not in my prayer list. Has anybody ever gotten something from God that you ain't prayed for, but you know you need it? I did not pray for this. But guess what? I didn't pick him. He picked me.

And let me tell you something. You did not choose God. Jesus is very clear: I chose you. I picked you while you were still a sinner Christ died for you. He didn't pick the cleaned up church you, he picked the broken you, the messy you, the club you, the you that was chasing women, the you that didn't know your worth—that's the you he picked. That you.

So if he picked you, who cares who hasn't picked you. If he picked you, who cares who's picking on you? Oh, my God. That's what the Bible says next.

"Who then is the one who condemns?" Who? "No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that," somebody say more than that. He "...was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

Jesus didn't just die for your sins. The Bible says that there is more than that. Woo hoo, there's more than that. There is more to Christianity than the cross, there is more to the gospel than Good Friday, there is more to your story than the pain. There is promise at the end.

See, God put this in my spirit for somebody here today. I don't know who you are, maybe you're watching online, maybe you're sitting in the back somewhere. But God put this in my spirit for you. There is more to your story than the cross that you bear.

Did you hear me? I said there is more to your story than the cross that you bear. I preaching to somebody right now going through something so heavy that it hurts to just get out of bed. Your wife doesn't know it, your husband doesn't know it, your kids don't know it, your parents don't know it—but it hurts just to get out of bed.

I'm preaching to somebody whose shame and secrets shout at them while God's grace and love whispers to them. But God flew me all the way from New York City to tell you this, just this. After you get this, you're done. You can go home. Flew me all the way from New York just to tell you this—your life is more than the cross that you bear.

There is more to your story than the chapter that you are in. There is more to your story... Somebody just say, turn the page. Turn to your neighbor and say, "Turn the page." You all do that here? Is that alright? Can I do that? Just turn to your neighbor and say, "Turn the page."

Turn the page because God wants to turn the page is somebody's life today. Somebody needs to let go of something that happened to them when they were little. Turn the page. Turn the page. The grace of God turns the page.

You might be broken right now but you won't be broken forever. You might be lonely right now, but you won't be lonely forever. You might be overlooked right now, but you won't be overlooked forever. You might be confused right now, but clarity will come later.

See weeping may endure for a night but joy—I said joy, I said joy comes in the morning, because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. But if there is no condemnation for those in Christ, why is it that so many of us walk around here feeling so condemned?

Why do so many Christians still feel condemned by choice and condemned by people and condemned by trauma and condemned by rejection. If there's really no condemnation in Christ, why do you feel so condemned? Why do you not like the person you see in when you look in the mirror?

If there is no condemnation in Christ, then you're forgiven and justified by God. I think we miss an important part of the grace of God. And the thing that we miss is the grace of God means that God forgives my sin but remembers me. The grace of God means that God doesn't condemn you even if he doesn't condone all of your choices!

Did you hear what I just said? See, that's an anomaly in our culture. Either we condone you or we condemn you, but God doesn't condemn you even if he doesn't condone all of your choices. Why? Because Jesus died but more than that—I said but more than that he was raised to life.

Somebody in here should connect so deeply with the resurrection that it should change the way you live today, on the spot. Because like Jesus, something put you in the grave. Somebody threw you in a grave somewhere and left you there to die. But if the grave couldn't hold Jesus, oh I feel like preaching, then it can't hold you either. If it couldn't hold Jesus, it can't hold you either.

Now Jesus is actively sitting at the right hand of God and do you know what he is doing? He has angels flying around his throne saying: holy, holy, holy. He is surrounded by streets of gold in glory, in the position of the ultimate power—he has the ultimate power of the universe.

And do you know what he is doing in that seat of power? The Bible tells you. He's interceding for you. With all of that power at his disposal he is interceding for you as we speak. See, we want Jesus to intervene for us but what we really need Jesus intercede for us.

The reason why things have died in your life, but you haven't—you hear me? I said the reason why things have died in your life, but you haven't is because Jesus was interceding for you long before you knew you needed him.

So pass the cake. I don't even believe in God. I'm just here because somebody dragged me to church today. Whoa, whoa, whoa listen. You don't pray to gravity, but it still keeps you on the ground. Is that rocket science? I know I'm not the sharpest tool in the drawer, but even I get that one.

The Bible says that Jesus is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world. That means ever since the first breath of creation Jesus has been saying Father forgive them for they know not what they do. Father forgive them because they do not know who they are.



That's why we devalue each other. That's why they're so anxious. That's why they don't understand their worth or their purpose. See, whether you know it or not, you're listening to me right now because Jesus interceded you right into this divine intervention. That was bars like this, that was bars. Yeah, that's good.

That leads me to my third point and I'm going to get out of your way. I'm going to let you guys go get brunch. Point number three... If you're going to leave here today more than a conqueror, here's the last thing you've got to take with you. I'm going to give this with you in the name of Jesus. You must understand that you need to:

Trust God for what you lack.

You need to trust God for what you lack. The next verses read, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long;' somebody is facing death all day long, "we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

Because Jesus sits at the right hand of God, there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God. Come on, look at me. There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God.

Well, pass the cake, "You don't know what I did."

I said there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God. "But you don't know what I say." I said there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God. "But you don't know what I thought."

How many ways do I have to say it? There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God! Nothing! Nothing can separate you from God's love for you. Not trouble, not danger, not hardships, not depression, not disorders, nothing! Why? Because in all these things we are more than conquerors through him—through him—who loves us. That's why. That's why.

Somebody should shout as loud as you can, "I am more than a conqueror in Jesus!" Oh you've got to say it like you mean it. "I am more than a conqueror in Jesus!" Say it one more time so the Devil can hear you. "I am more than a conqueror in Jesus." Come on, give yourselves some love.

See, see, see when you are more than a conqueror you don't have to fight your battles, God fights your battles for you. The Bible says the battle is not yours, it's the Lord's. It's the Lord's battle to fight. See, when you are more than a conqueror you don't need to fix every broken thing. You don't need to reconcile every relationship. You don't need to solve every problem in your life. You learn that it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

See, my biggest problem today is I'm preaching to a room full of conquerors. Some of you in here at the sound of my voice or you're watching online, you've conquered some things that would have destroyed or killed the average person.

You've conquered rape. You've conquered molestation. You've conquered death. You've conquered drugs. You've conquered divorce. You've conquered failed parenting. You've conquered incarceration. Somebody in here way in the back has conquered being the only minority in a majority space. You've conquered all of these different things.

And because of that you think that you're good, but you're not. Because, at best, as a conqueror you can only conquer on one or two levels. You can only conquer one or two things at a time because it depends on your strength and your ability to get through. That's why Paul lists all of the levels that we fight on and said without Jesus, at best, you can be a conqueror. At best you can just defeat one thing at one time.

You can't win on every level because you can't conquer every level. That's why whenever it feels like you are succeeding in one area of your life it feels like you are failing in another. Who am I preaching to? Where's my real section—I keep looking for you all. It's you all way back here? I think you all are way back there somewhere. Yeah, I see you all. I think my real section is in that corner.

Has anybody in here experienced that? You feel like you're getting victory in one area of your life but then you're failing in another? Victory over lust but failing in anxiety, right? Victory over gossip but failing in pride. Is there anybody in here who has experience that?

Well, let me help you today. That happens because your trying in and of yourself to conquer your problems and troubles. But I know a man named Jesus—I said but I know a man named Jesus who sat in heaven in eternity past and who looked at the Father and the Spirit and he said to the Father and the Spirit—I know I can conquer up here but I'm going to go down there and I'm going to conquer as a man and I'm going to go down there and I'm going to show sin that I can win down there as a man.

And I'm going to go down there and I'm going to tell death, you better let my people go. And I'm going to go down there and I'm going to tell the Devil, One greater than you has come! Yeah. And when I do that and when I win, I'm going to give my victory to every man, every woman, and every child who receives me.

And here's the breakthrough for somebody today. Here's the breakthrough. When you're a conqueror, you win because of what you do, but when you are more than a conqueror you win because of what he's done.

That's why today's passage closes like this. And I'm done. Today's passage closes when Paul says, "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.”

There is nothing, there is nothing in this world or beyond this world, nothing physical or spiritual, nothing in your past, present, or future that can separate you, right now, from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

But notice, the one thing Paul didn't mention is you. He mentioned angels and demons, heights and depths, death and life, but you are the one variable that he leaves out. And the reason why is because you can't stop Jesus from loving you, but you can stop loving Jesus.

You can't stop Jesus from pursuing you, but you can stop pursuing Jesus, which is why as we close the most important decision that you have to make today has nothing to do with God. God already made his mind up about you 2,000 years ago. When Jesus went to the cross and walked out of the grave, God made up his mind about you.

God said daughter. God said son. God said forgiven. God said redeemed. God said chosen. God said mine! God has made up his mind about you. Stop blaming God for choices and decisions that you need to make. God has made up his mind about you. He's not punishing you for something he's already paid for. God has made up his mind. He says beloved, you're the one who needs to make up yours.

And whether you've been a Christian for 30 years or whether this is the first time you've ever been in church—all of us need to make the same decision each and every day. And that decision is simply this:

Whose side am I on?

See when Jesus rose from the dead, he didn't just rise to life he rose to a whole new dimension of existence. He is now body and spirit for all of eternity. He is now God and man for all of eternity. He is now wounded and healed for all of eternity. So if you decide to be on team Jesus today, don't expect to go back to your old ways and old friends and old life the same. Jesus makes all things new.

That means that Jesus is going to make you love some people you don't want to love. He's going to have you praying for people who don't vote like you. He's going to have you serving people who don't believe what you believe. Jesus is going to give you a resurrection of vision, of love, and of grace. So it's time. Enough of me talking, it's time for us to make our decision. Whose team will we be on?

Will you bow with me in prayer?

Father God, I thank you that though we need to make our minds up about you each and every day, you have already made your mind up about us. God, I thank you that we can live in the truth of your love, even when we don't believe it ourselves. God, I thank you

that you never stop loving us, you never stop pursuing us, you never stop wanting us even though God, if we're honest, there are moments and times that we just want to let go of the rope.

God, I pray today for somebody in here who needs to make a decision. God, I know that there are things coming at us each and every day that tempt us, that try us, but the beautiful thing is, Lord, we don't have to be conquerors anymore. We can be more than conquerors through he who died for us.

So, Jesus, may your love surround your people in this room, and may your love push us to check our jerseys and to make the right decisions. As we do that, may you get all of the glory. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.