



By Bessie Wilbon

Smith To Host Youth Ministry

Throughout the summer Johnson C. Smith University has been the site for youth programs. Upward Bound, AACT Theatre Camp and the National Youth Sports Program were a few of the outstanding events enjoyed this year by kids 5 to 17 years of age. Later this summer, July 30 through August 2, 1987 youngsters from Puerto Rico to Maine will come to Johnson C. Smith for the Eastern Regional Presbyterian Youth Ministry. Other similar events for Presbyterian youth will be held at Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, Illinois, and at Snow Mountain Ranch Gramby, Colorado.

Organizers of the Eastern Regional Presbyterian Youth ministry say Charlotte, with Johnson C. Smith, is the ideal location for this year's program because of its central location along the Eastern Seaboard, and because of its wealth of Presbyterian history. In fact Johnson C. Smith shares a prominent part of that story too.

JCSU, as an independent, private college, was founded under the auspices of the Committee on Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. The original purpose of the Historically Black College was to provide an institution of training of men for the ministry, for catechist, and for teachers. Johnson C. Smith's role has expanded since those early years and now offers varied fields of study for everyone. So, when youngsters from many states arrive here to develop leadership skills and be introduced to directions and guidelines for youth ministry, they can feel right at home on the JCSU campus which has played a significant role in the Presbyterian Church.

For more information contact the Catawba Administrative Unit at 372-9360.

There are many variations in the translation of the great verse Romans 8:28. However, in all of them there is one word that remains constantly present-the word, KNOW. It is a statement of common Christian agreement which Paul affirms with verve and gladness. It is not something that might be or could be or is expected to be. It is what Christians are sure is a fact.

How do we know that all things fall into a pattern for good for those who love Him? This is what Paul seeks to develop in the text. But it may also be said that Paul could see this from his own life. His encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road, his blindness, his years in the Arabian desert, his tent-making, his sufferings, his friendships, his meeting of opposition—all had been "working out" for good to him and the work of His Lord.

Can we say the same from our own experience? How many dark things had bright sides to them, how many difficult days we look back on as formative of some of our best work.

THE LESSON

"We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose. Those whom God had already chosen he also set apart to become like his Son, so that the Son would be the first among many brothers. And so those whom God set apart he called; and those he called, he put right with himself, and he shared his glory with them. In view of all of this, what can we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? Certainly, not God, who did not even keep back his own Son, but offered him for us all! He gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things? Who will accuse God's chosen people? God himself declares them not guilty! Who, then will condemn them? Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life and is at the right side of God, pleading with him for us! Who, then, can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship or persecution or hunger or poverty, or danger or death?—No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us!—Romans 8:28-37

God has been shown to be for us, not only now but from eternity, or from that moment when our decision to freely accept the offer of Jesus' redemption was foreseen. God is not a stern, unbiased, inflexible autocrat, but a loving Father who is "on our side" who is most desirous of blessing us and who proposes to grant us unimaginable splendor and glory if we just keep on doing His will.

Who, then, can effectively overcome us as long as our Lord is with us with His mighty power? To the extent that our resources in God become apparent to us, by faith, the oppositions and obstacles so apparent to sight become less ominous and overpowering.

Many of the troubles Paul mentions can separate us from much that blesses and benefits life. Various troubles can cause us anxiety and tension. Persecution can sever us from family ties and, perhaps, even from our homes and country. Famine can cut off normal nutrition and harm our health. Nakedness might take away our outward respectability or tokens of worth among men. The sword of execution may threaten our death, or that of those we love dearly. Yet, none of these things can take from us our Savior's love. His love is unceasing, always available in good times and bad.

Paul asserts that not only can we survive or bear the many adverse realities he has been describing, but that we can be victorious in the midst of them. In all these we achieve a great conquest. To be more than conquerors means to experience joy, exuberance, and power. Christians can know this in the face of every obstacle.

While there may be trials and problems, even loneliness and death for some of His followers, the Lord's presence, power and compassionate companionship will never leave them. God's love surrounds us, it sustains us, it buoys us up in deep and troubled waters, and it shields us in every confrontation.

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