

LIFT UP YOUR HEAD

In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. – Romans 8:37



In 1865, Kamehameha V passed an “isolation law” to separate those with leprosy from society. They were to be sent to Kalawao, Moloka’i. In this place, deep, rough oceans of the North Pacific served as a barrier on the east, west and northern shores. This southern boundary was at the foot of one of the highest cliffs in the world. A year later in January 1866, the first boatload of patients was cast off between Waikolu Valley and Kalawao, the first Kalaupapa settlement. They had no facilities, only minimal supplies and just the clothes they had on at the holding station in Kakaako on the island of Oahu. Since then, over 8000 men, women and children were taken to this isolated peninsula. 95 percent were of Hawaiian ancestry and left to survive on their own. By December, despite being separated from their families, despite their affliction, 23 men and 12 women formed the Siloama ---“spring of Siloam”---Church at Kalawao. Though they would never see their families again, they found strength in God. Regardless of their circumstances and objectionable conditions, they did not stray from their faith, but instead, held on to their hope in God.

Where do you put your hope? Perhaps, it was in your connections, contacts, relationships, or something else, but it wasn’t enough. You may have felt hopeless when lying in a hospital bed or faced with the loss of a loved one or deserted by someone you deeply cared for. It’s these moments that we realize how much we need Jesus. Like our ancestors, we can lean on Him because through His death, Jesus secured our pardon and through His resurrection, He secured our daily hope. Over the years, I have officiated many memorial services, but nothing gets me more excited than to praise God for the life of a Christian that is an “overwhelming” conqueror (Rm.8:37). I don’t know when I am going to die, but I want to die as one. There are so many people dying and holding on to the last words of a doctor that there is no medical hope, instead of the promises of God’s Word. So many people looking for answers in all the wrong places, instead of prayer. So many people that have lost all hope, yet I lean on the words of an old gospel song that says, *“Because He lives, I can face tomorrow”* and *“Because He lives, all fear is gone”*. In our scripture, the apostle Paul encourages us to lift our heads up and to make a list of things that you will conquer. He says, *“For I am convinced...”* (Rom. 8:38). In other words, there is no room for doubt. There is no greater clarity than the absolute teachings of God’s Word. Jesus is real! He goes on to describe some extraordinary dimensions. He addresses the dimension of EXISTENCE (*“...that neither death, nor life”*) meaning that your valleys and mountain top experiences, as well as death and life do not have the last word. In the dimension of SPIRITUAL REALITIES (*“...nor angels, nor principalities”*), we have hope that even if it seems that all “hell” has broken out in your life, they don’t have the last word. In the dimension of TIME (*“...nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers”*), whatever mess or fear that you had yesterday, experiencing today, or expect tomorrow, they don’t have the last word. In the dimension of SPACE (*“...nor height, nor depth”*), your “highs” and “lows” don’t have the last word. And just in case he missed anything, Paul says, *“...nor any other created thing”*. Then he ends with why we can always lift our heads to the Lord. He says, *“Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, Our Lord.”* **ONLY GOD HAS THE LAST WORD!**