

Theme: We are More than Conquerors Through Christ!

1. In Life
2. In Death

There are a number of sections of Scripture that we really would benefit from reading and being reminded of daily. Our text for this morning is one of those sections. It is one of the most well-known and beloved sections of Scripture. It is encouraging and comforting; it's powerful, and empowering. They are verses that many of us have probably memorized. But have we always understood fully what these verses are saying about Christ and us? Have we taken the time recently to let these incredible, powerful verses sink in to our heads and hearts? Let's do so this morning! Our text is the last verses of Romans chapter 8:

Romans 8:35-39 (NIV)

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 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.

What does it mean to be a "conqueror"? I would think that in war it would mean winning a battle or a campaign against your enemy. In sports I think it would mean winning a championship of some kind over all the other participants in the field. What does it mean to be "**more than conquerors**" (**see v. 37**) as our text states? Well, I would think it would mean not just being victorious in one battle or in one championship but rather to be repeatedly and completely victorious and win out over everyone and everything. In fact that is the sense of the Greek word that is used here in our text. It literally means to be "*hyper-victorious*" or to be a "*super-conqueror*."

I think an emperor like Alexander the Great who conquered nearly the entire known world during his short 33 years of life could be called "**more than a conqueror**" when it came to war. A conqueror who seemed to be undefeated and undefeatable on the battle field.

In sports I think of Michael Jordan and his Chicago Bulls teams of the '90s. He and his teams won 6 NBA titles in that decade and never lost an NBA Finals series. Maybe you who live in the Bay Area automatically think of Joe Montana and his 4 Super Bowl titles in a ten year span for the San Francisco 49ers. "Joe Cool" never lost in the Super Bowl, and much like Michael Jordan, was so great and just so dominant during his title runs that it seemed simply inevitable that he would find a way to win it all. Today, maybe we don't think of an individual, but rather a team of "**super conquerors**:" the Golden State Warriors. They are the winners of two of the last three NBA titles and the record holders for most wins in a season and most wins over a three year stretch. They are so dominant right now, in fact, that I heard recently that going into this season the oddsmakers in Las Vegas have made them the heaviest favorite to win the title of any team ever in American professional sports history! Much of the conversation in the national media around the Warriors lately has been how "unfair" it is that they are so good, and how it doesn't seem possible that anyone can beat this team this year—or maybe even in the next few years!

However, Paul in our text is not talking specifically about some "great" individuals like Alexander the Great or Michael Jordan, or Joe Montana, or a great team like the Golden State Warriors when he says in our text that "**we are more than conquerors**" (v. 37). He is, in fact, talking about us and all believers in Christ—we are the "**we**" he is speaking of in this verse!

Now, you can imagine how our human nature can “twist” that fact in the wrong direction, right? I remember seeing billboards for one of the mega-churches in Houston that encouraged people in big-bold letters to, “Discover the Champion Inside You!” That sounds good. That sounds so empowering to our flesh...but the problem is it isn’t true and it isn’t Biblical!

The fact is our title as “*super-conquerors*” has nothing to do with our accomplishments, our own dominance on the field of battle or competition—it actually has nothing to do with us at all! It has everything to do with the “Champion,” our CONQUEROR, who earned that title for us: Jesus Christ. So actually, we need to “Discover (or at least be reminded of!) the Champion Outside of Ourselves!” Paul reminds us in our text that **We Are More than Conquerors Through Christ!** **1. In life** and **2. in death.**

Do you feel like “**more than a conqueror**” right now **1. in life?** I’m willing to bet that if I was to ask that question this morning a good number of us would answer, “No!” (or possibly even, “No way!!!”). In our every day life we probably don’t feel much like Alexander the Great parading into yet another conquered land, or Michael Jordan, or Steph Curry pumping his fist victoriously after winning yet another championship. No, some days we don’t feel victorious enough to even “conquer” getting out of bed in the morning!

But is our text talking about how we “feel” about our status as “**more than conquerors through Him [Christ] who loved us**” (v. 37)? No! Paul is here stating a fact about what we are through Jesus and this reminder is intended by God to bring us comfort, strength, and a true sense of victory in this life. Paul asks, “**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?**” (v. 35). The question, of course, is a rhetorical one and the obvious answer Paul is looking for is “No! Nothing can separate us from the love Christ has for each one of us!” If you notice, these calamities of life that Paul lists in the first verse of our text are all things that happened to him during his ministry. He lists many of them in his second letter to the Corinthians, “**From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness**” (2 Corinthians 11:24-27). Look at all the things Paul had to suffer through as a missionary of Christ! And yet what does he say in v. 37 of our text after recounting some of the very tragedies he endured for the sake of Christ? “**Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us**” (v. 37 - NKJV)!

Now, we may, God willing, never be put through as many trials and difficulties and tests of faith as Paul was in our own lifetimes, but I know that we can all “fill in the blanks” of that list in the first verse of our text to include some of the trials, tests and difficulties that God has allowed to come our way in our lifetime, or perhaps we are experiencing right now. Think about, or even write down some of your own trials and difficulties and add them to the list of calamities that Paul wrote down in v. 35, “**Who (or what) shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword...or stress, or family troubles, relationship issues, life changes, difficult decisions, confusion or uncertainty, unemployment, sickness or injury, sorrow and depression, etc.** or whatever else you are going through right now. Can any of that “**separate us from the love of Christ?**” (v. 35). Paul answers that very question for us in the last verses of our text: “**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.**” (v. 38-39).

How can Paul be so confident? After all he's been through, after all the tragedies he's had to endure for the sake of Christ how can he be so **"convinced"** that nothing in all the universe **"will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (v. 39)? We don't hear Paul asking the "Why God?" question after he experienced all these calamities because he knew that Christ proved His inseparable love for him and all people when He gave His very life for us on the cross and took the punishment of hell for our sins! If Christ went such great lengths and through such great pains to save us and prove His love to us He is not going to allow anything—not even death itself separate us from Himself.

That is why Jesus' work didn't just stop with His death on the cross on Good Friday. He made sure—permanently and undeniably sure—that we would be made **More than conquerors** even **2. in death** by defeating death through His own resurrection from the grave on Easter Sunday morning. His resurrection guarantees our own resurrection on the Last Day and is the promise that death for the believer will be the very gateway to eternal life in heaven. The resurrection of Jesus also proved that Jesus was who He said He was: true God, the Son of God Himself, the Savior of the world. The resurrection of Christ was the message that Paul continually preached and pointed his hearers to throughout his ministry. It was also the basis of his confident statement in our text, **"For I am convinced that neither death... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (v. 38-39). Nothing, not life and its struggles, not death and its terrors can separate us from Jesus' love for us.

However, someone once pointed out that what is not included in this list is ourselves. They point out correctly that our own unbelief and rejection of Christ can separate us from Him for we all have that frightening ability inside each one of our sin-stained hearts to say "No!" to Jesus; to say "No thanks, Jesus, I'll look elsewhere," or "I'll try and earn salvation myself, Jesus." But will unbelief even separate us from the love of Christ? No! He still loves us even when we turn our backs on Him. In fact, he gave us two of the most beautiful parables in the Bible to describe His frantic desire to find His lost sheep, and His unconditional willingness to welcome back His lost sons and daughters with open arms and rejoicing after they return to Him. So, yes, we can certainly separate ourselves from our love for Him, but we can never, ever separate ourselves from His love for us. That is what makes us **"more than conquerors"** (v. 37). We have the "safety net" of His love and grace catching us each time we fall. He will not let our lives shatter to pieces on the ground. He gives us the assurance of His forgiveness and the power of His Spirit to pick us back up, to assure us that we have been washed clean and dressed in the "white robe" (**Revelation 7:9-14**) of Christ's righteousness.

Alexander the Great? Definitely a great conqueror! But not **"more than a conqueror."** Despite all his greatness and all the lands he conquered he still died—and died very young (only 33 years of age).

Michael Jordan? Undefeated in 6 NBA finals, but undefeatable? No. Did you know that Michael Jordan ended his career by playing two mostly forgettable seasons with the Washington Wizards? In those last two seasons his team lost more games than they won and didn't even make the playoffs. Joe Montana's great career ended in a similar way when he was traded to the Kansas City Chiefs for his last two seasons. Yes, he at least made the playoffs both of those years, but he never returned to the Super Bowl. As for the Warriors, as much as we'd like to forget, their record-setting 73 win team from two seasons ago lost in Game 7 of the NBA Finals on a three pointer in the final seconds. Conquerors? Yes, all of them in their particular sports. But not **"more than conquerors."** Not undefeated, and not undefeatable.

How about us? By ourselves we probably wouldn't even be considered "conquerors" in life. But **In Christ**—our great *super CONQUEROR*—by His shed blood and resurrection from the dead He has made us **"more than conquerors"** (v. 37) **1. in life** and **2. in death**. Remind yourself of that truth daily right here in God's Word. Amen!