

More Than Conquerors

Romans 8: 35 - 39

- Today, we come to the great conclusion of Romans chapter 8, and in a very real sense it is the great conclusion of all of the theology that Paul has been teaching us in the first 8 chapters of the book of Romans.
 - It is important that we come to this great conclusion because theology without application to our lives is pointless.
 - You can know the Bible, from cover to cover. You can know theology books from cover to cover, but if that knowledge doesn't change your life, then what good is it?
 - If all that we have learned doesn't call us out from the world into a new and different life, then what is the point of what we have learned?
- The point of all of this theology that Paul has been giving us regarding the justification and adoption into God's family that is ours through union with Christ is a changed life—a life that is lived differently from the world around us.
 - That is why Paul starts this section at the end of Romans 8 with this question:

Romans 8: 31 What then shall we say to these things?

- What do we say in response to God being so for us, that He gave up His Son so that we could stand justified before Him? And because, through Christ, we stand justified before God (meaning God has declared us to be righteous) there is no charge, no condemnation that can ever again be laid against us. And because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, there can never be any separation from God's love. We are secure forever.
- This is the theology that Paul has been hammering home to us. What do we say in response to it? How does knowing these things change our lives, so that we live our lives differently from the world around us?

Romans 8: 35 – 39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- As we think about how to apply all of this great theology to our lives, let's start by thinking of the great contrast that Paul paints for us in verses 36 – 37.
 - Last week, we touched on verse 36. It is a quote from Psalm 44 that Paul applies to the Christians in the early church who were suffering because of their faith in Christ. That doesn't seem to be the greatest application of all of this theology. Who on earth would want to live their life as a sheep to be slaughtered?
 - If that were the only outcome, then of course you would be tempted to not do too much with this theology Paul has been teaching us no matter how true it might be. In fact, Paul understood that very clearly.

1 Corinthians 15: 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

- If all we are is sheep to be slaughtered than what is the point? But this is Paul's whole point here. Yes, in this life, because of our faith in Christ, the world will hate us, and our lives may seem to become as nothing more than sheep to be slaughtered. But that is only one side of the coin. There is another.
 - Let's remember who the writer of Hebrews tells us was the forerunner, or pioneer of our faith. It was Jesus.

Hebrews 12: 2 Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Jesus shows us that there is also another side—a side that makes the whole sheep to be slaughtered side of the coin worth it. You can see it so clearly there in the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Jesus was the lamb of God who would indeed be slaughtered to take away our sin, but he is also the King of kings, more than a conqueror, who is seated at the right hand of God.
- Jesus' life shows us the life that is ours that Paul is describing for us in:

Romans 8: 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

1. How in the world can we be like sheep to be slaughtered and at the same time be more than conquerors?

- The answer to that question is the really the summation of all of the theology that Paul has been teaching us here in Romans. Really all the theology Paul taught in all of his letters.
 - If a person is a Christian, then all that they are, from being as a sheep to be slaughtered to being more than a conqueror, is through him who loved us. Christians are what they are only because God has loved them through Christ. That is Paul's whole point here in Romans 8.
 - Because of Christ and what Christ has done, you are a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5: 16 – 18 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God.

- In Christ, you are a new creation. A superhuman if you will. A person who has lamb-like humility because they know that they are a sinner saved by grace, and a person with lion-like boldness because they are secure in the love of an all-powerful God.
- The world around you, that is living apart from Christ, is defined by the flesh, and lives for the flesh.
 - But Christians are defined by the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8: 39 the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- God's love for us is bound up in Christ. We experience God's love in Christ.
 - In Christ, we are as sheep to be slaughtered. In Christ, we are more than conquerors.
 - Why? Because Christ is both the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and the lion of Judah who defeated Satan, sin, and death.
- I want you to focus on the phrase in Christ. It is such an important phrase. In fact, Paul uses that phrase or a variation of it over 160 times in his letters.
 - It is in Christ that you are a new creation. It is in Christ that you experience the love of God and become more than a conqueror. This does not happen in yourself. It happens in Christ.
 - What does Paul mean by the phrase in Christ? Let's go back to remind ourselves of what we learned in:

Romans 6: 5 – 8 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

- Now before I explain what it means to be in Christ, just notice the very thinking that Paul is talking about at the end of Romans 8 that is in these verses. We are as sheep to be slaughtered.
 - The old self is crucified with Christ. Why? So that our flesh is brought to nothing, to be of no account. That's where lamb-like humility comes from.
- But, because our flesh has died with Christ, we are no longer enslaved to sin, we have been set free from the penalty and power of sin, and we live forever. That is where the lion-like boldness comes from. In Christ, you are more than a conqueror because in Christ, you have conquered Satan, sin, and death.
- It is complete total victory. That only comes as a result of being in Christ.
- To be in Christ is to unite your life to Christ by faith.
 - I think the best way that I can describe what it means to be in Christ is to think of it in terms of kingdom. The Bible is clear that there are only two kingdoms. You are in one or you are in the other. There is Satan's kingdom, the kingdom of this world, and the Kingdom of Christ.
 - The kingdom of this world is defined by the flesh. The kingdom of this world lives for self, even trying to save itself. The kingdom of this world is defined by your fleshly identity.
 - ♦ I'm an American. I'm gay. I'm trans. I'm an athlete. I'm a scholar. I'm a business owner. I'm successful. I'm a failure. I'm a home school mother. I'm a father. I'm a good provider. I'm a good spouse. I'm a good person.
 - Now if those things are your identity, then you will never consider yourself as a sheep to be slaughtered. Why? Because, if you lay down your flesh that will kill your identity and therefore kill you.

Instead of laying down your life, you will do whatever it takes to solidify your hold on that identity.

- But you will also never be more than a conqueror because you can never have mastery over any of those things. In fact, because those things are your identity, they will have mastery over you.
- To be in Christ means that you have renounced the kingdom of this world and whatever identity you have in this world to be in the kingdom of Christ and to be identified with Christ.
 - To by faith join your life to the life, death, resurrection, and even the ascension of Jesus. So, your life is no longer defined by who you are and what you do, but rather by who Christ is and what He has done.
 - ♦ Oh, you are still in the world, but you are not of the world. You are still an American, a father, business owner, a home school mother or whatever. In fact, you are still a sinner with a sinful nature. But those things no longer define you. Christ does.
 - To be in Christ means just what Jesus said it meant.

Luke 9: 23 “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

- Are you in Christ? Have you died to yourself, to live for Christ?
 - You will not be willing to lay down your life, as a sheep to be slaughtered, if you haven’t by faith crucified your flesh with Christ.
 - To crucify your flesh with Christ is simply to say that this life counts for nothing if it doesn’t count for Christ.
 - To crucify your flesh is to say I will lay down my life, and all that the world holds dear, to take up the life of Christ.
 - To crucify your flesh is to say I will no longer be defined by who I am and what I do, but by who Christ is and what he has done.
 - Now when you get to that point, where by faith your life is wholly bound to Christ, not only will you be willing to lay down your life, but you will also become more than a conqueror, because Christ has conquered all.

John 16:33 “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

- When you, by faith, bind your life and your identity to the life of Christ and his identity, you not only die with Christ, as a lamb to be slaughtered, but you live with Christ in total and complete glorious victory.
 - Think how Jesus achieved that glorious and complete total victory.

Philippians 2: 6 – 11 Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Jesus became more than a conqueror by laying down his life as a sheep to be slaughtered. If that is what the pioneer and perfecter of our faith did, then if our life is bound to his, won't the same be true for us?
- You see this is the difference between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of Christ. In the kingdom of this world the way up is to try to claw your way up, following after Satan. Who said,

Isaiah 14: 13 – 15 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' ¹⁵But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.

- Satan's aim was to climb up and take a place of glory, but he was cast down.
- In the kingdom of heaven, the way up is down. To lay down your life at the feet of Jesus, so that Jesus can lift you to glory.

Ephesians 2: 5 – 6 (God) made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

2. But what in the world does it mean to be more than a conqueror?

- The phrase that is translated in our Bible as, "we are more than conquerors" comes from the compound Greek word, "hypernikomen."
 - In the middle of that compound word, we see the Greek word "niko." "Niko" means to conquer or to overcome.
 - In Greek hyper means over and above, or to use another word super.
 - In the comics, who is Superman? He is a man over and above any other man. So what Paul is trying to get across to us here is that in Christ, we are super overcomers. What is it that we are super overcoming?
- An enemy who is more than human. Paul reminds us of this in:

Ephesians 6: 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- Because our foe is supernatural, our victory, when it is finally achieved, will be supernatural. A super victory that can only happen because we are in Christ. At the cross, Christ has completely defeated the powers of this world.
- This battle we are fighting is a super battle. It is lifelong war. In spiritual warfare there is no peace treaty, no truce, no timeout.
 - The text here is in the present tense, in the Greek, where Paul says, in verse 36, "for your sake we are being killed all the day long." From the moment we join our lives to the life of Christ by faith, we become the target of the world, the flesh, and the devil. There is never a moment's reprieve.
- But the spiritual victories achieved by God's people are super victories because they are eternal victories.
 - We live in a world bound by time. Apart from spiritual battles and spiritual victories everything we accomplish will pass away no matter how great an earthly victory may seem in the world's eyes.

- Great monuments will crumble. Works of art will decay. Fortunes will disappear. Heroes will die. Even great triumphs of the human mind will be forgotten. Not so with spiritual victories. They will be remembered forever to the glory of God forever.
- The whole point of the Christian life is to glorify God, and the way a Christian does that is by winning grace empowered victories over the forces of Satan.
 - Humanly speaking, sometime in eternity past, God was faced with a choice, when Satan rebelled against Him.
 - God could have annihilated Satan and those fallen angels.
 - But that would not have glorified God by proving that God's way of running the universe is right. It would only prove that God is more powerful than Satan.
 - So instead of punishing Satan immediately God allowed Satan's rebellion to run its course.
 - In the meantime, God created a universe and a new race of beings, mankind, in which the rebellion of Satan would be tested.
 - ♦ Satan would have his way for a while. Satan could try to order things according to his will rather than God's. He would even be allowed to seduce the first man, Adam, to follow him in his rebellion.
 - But God also reserved the right to call out a new people to Himself. The very people Paul's writing about in Romans 8. These individuals would be foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified all according to God's sovereign will.
 - And when they were called, they would be thrown into the spiritual struggle that Satan and his demons had brought upon their race. Satan would be allowed to attack, persecute, and even kill God's people.
 - But for those who have been brought to know the love of God in Christ Jesus, these sufferings would not be an intolerable hardship, but would instead be a privilege that they could count themselves happy to endure for Jesus.
 - It is as a Christian, in faith, endures suffering with joy and hope, knowing that there is more to life than this life, that God is glorified, and eternal victories are won.
 - Victories in such sufferings are eternal in the same way that the victory of our Lord upon the cross is eternal. Our sufferings endure for a moment, but they achieve a super victory, because they bring eternal glory to God.
 - In eternity, there will be angels who look on us, everyone who's been redeemed by Jesus Christ and thrust into spiritual warfare by him, and they will say, "Look there is another of God's saints who triumphed over evil by the Lord's power."

Revelation 12: 11 – 12 they have conquered Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them!

- ♦ What great glory comes to God and to us as a result of willingly laying down our lives for the one who loved us and called us to himself.
- In achieving these eternal victories, we who love the Lord Jesus Christ will indeed be more than conquerors, and the rewards of our victory will surpass anything ever attained by any earthly conqueror.
- In this life, like Jesus, we may wear nothing but a crown of thorns. But in heaven a super award awaits us. We will wear crowns that are incorruptible, but we will lay those crowns at the feet of Jesus.

Revelation 4: 10 – 11 They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

- They are our crowns but are laid at Jesus feet to show that they were won for his honor and by his strength, and God’s grace.
- Jesus is the prototype. The true sheep fit to be slaughtered. The lamb slain before the creation of the world, but he is also the Super conqueror, and we are more than conquerors through him.
- 3. So, now we must ask the question, “What in the world does it mean to live as more than a conqueror?”**
- What does it look like to live that way? A life of faith. A life of simply trusting God in everything. Living in the confidence of what Paul said in:

Romans 8: 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

- Do you know why:

Romans 8: 38 - 39 neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Because in faith, secure in the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, we know that in all those things, God is in control, and He is working for His glory and our good. So not only will these things never harm us, but they will also ultimately all be turned to good by God.
- A conqueror is one who merely defeats an enemy, a super conqueror is one who causes the enemy to be a helper. How do we do that? By faith—being secure that God is working in the struggle.
- When we are secure in God’s love for us through Jesus Christ, we not only can take whatever evil the enemy wants to throw at us, we can use it to glorify God. Because we know that not only is there nothing the enemy can throw at us that will separate us from the love of God. Because God is taking everything the enemy throws at us and using it for good to conform us to the image of His Son and proclaim His glory to a watching world.



In the 2nd century AD, in an area of what is now part of southern France, there was a vibrant and growing church that began to face violent persecutions from crowds who saw the early church as the reason for the calamities they faced.

- Their trials are described in a letter, which was preserved by an historian of the early church known as Eusebius and written by Irenaeus who was the Bishop of that small group of believers.

"The severity of our trials here come from the unbridled fury of the heathen against God's people. The untold sufferings of the blessed martyrs, we are incapable of describing in detail: indeed, no pen could do them justice. The adversary swooped on us with all his might...He left no stone unturned in his efforts...to attack the servants of God so that they not only were barred from houses, baths, and the forum: they actually forbade any of us to be seen in any place whatever."

"These blessed martyrs charged into the fight, standing up to every kind of abuse and punishment, and made light of their heavy load as they hastened to Christ, proving beyond a doubt that the sufferings of the present time were not to be compared with the glory that is in store for us."

"The whole fury of the crowd, governor, and soldiers fell with crushing force on Blandina, through whom Christ proved that things which men regard as mean, unlovely, and contemptible are by God deemed worthy of great glory, because of her love for him shown in power and not wanting in appearance."

"When we were all afraid, and her earthly mistress (who was herself facing the ordeal of martyrdom) was in agony lest she should be unable even to make a bold confession of Christ because of bodily weakness, Blandina was filled with such power that those who took it in turns to subject her to every kind of torture from morning to night were exhausted by their efforts and confessed themselves beaten—they could think of nothing else to do to her."

"After the whips, after the beasts, after the griddle, the crowds were amazed that she was still breathing, for her whole body was mangled and her wounds gaped. They declared that torment of any one kind was enough to part soul and body, let alone this succession of torments of such extreme severity. But the blessed woman, wrestling magnificently grew in strength as she proclaimed her faith, and found refreshment, rest, and insensibility to her sufferings in uttering the words: 'I am a Christian we do nothing to be ashamed of.'"

- A lamb to be slaughtered but more than a conqueror. Lamb-like humility, lion-like boldness, just like Jesus her savior and Lord.
- Secure in our salvation, secure in the knowledge that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus:

Hebrews 12: 1 – 2 surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.