

**GREATER THAN: The Grave**  
**Romans 8:31-39<sup>i</sup>**

**SUNRISE SERVICE INTRO:**

Good morning! Happy resurrection Sunday! I am excited about the sunrise service this morning. Thank you for joining us today. Happy Easter to you. The Lord Jesus is risen, He is risen indeed.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning, Trinity! Happy Easter to you today. He has risen. He has risen indeed.

For those of you that are guests, we want to say a special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited to have you with us today. And on behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you here today.

We would love the opportunity to connect with you and you can do that in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area as we have a gift there for you. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you.

**SERIES INTRODUCTION:**

Today we begin a new teaching series that I pray you will be a part of for the duration of the next several weeks. A series we have entitled, "Greater Than." In this series we are going to be looking at the fact that The Lord Jesus is greater than many of the challenges we face. And by placing our faith in Him, trusting Him, and following Him, we can have hope in the midst of those things.

Today's message is entitled, "Greater Than The Grave." The fact that Jesus has risen from the grave is proof in and of itself that He is greater than the many difficulties that we experience. Today we are going to examine the resurrection of Jesus and provide an overview of our teaching series. So, I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to Romans chapter 8.

If you do not have a bible with you this morning, there is one located on a seat rack in a chair nearby. If you happen to need a bible, please feel free to take that with you today. Those were donated to us and we would love to pass that along to you as a gift to you today.

**OPENING ILLUSTRATION: I Am The Greatest<sup>ii</sup>**

As I was thinking about the title of our series, a story I heard years ago about a little boy that was playing baseball in his backyard came to mind. A boy about the age of 7 or 8. In fact, I think Kenny Rogers popularized this story with a song he recorded called, "The Greatest."<sup>iii</sup>

Like any boy at that age, his imagination ran wild. He was picturing himself in the Major League Baseball World Series and he was narrating the game by throwing the ball up in the air and catching it. He was living out the game.

Well, it came to the bottom of the 9<sup>th</sup> inning and he was up to bat. As he looked around and took in the sights and sounds that were in his mind, he made this statement, "I am the greatest hitter in the world." And he threw the ball up in the air, and he swung as hard as he could, and he missed. He said, "Strike one." Not bothered by it, he picked up the ball and said once more, "I am the greatest hitter in the world." He threw the ball up again, but this time he swung even harder... and missed it again. He said, "Strike two."

At this point he's a little discouraged. He picks up the ball and looks around to make sure no one is looking at him and said one last time, "I am the greatest hitter in the world." And he throws the ball up. And he swings... whiff. Strike three. The little boy looks down, he picks up the ball, and he says, "Wow. I didn't know I could pitch like that! I am the greatest pitcher in the world!"

You know, the thing I love about baseball is that it teaches us a lot about life. Think about some of the greatest hitters that have ever played the game: Ted Williams, Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and Hank Aaron. Did you know the best lifetime batting average in Major League Baseball is 344? Belongs to Ted Williams.

Now, for those of you that don't have a clue about baseball, that means that he got a hit 34% of the time that he went to bat. Another way you can look at it is that he either struck out, grounded out, popped out, or flew out 66% of the time. Baseball is one of the only sports where you can fail the majority of the time and still be called the greatest of all time.

You know, there are times in our lives where we fail, get knocked down, strikeout and we have a tendency to allow those times to define us. When in reality, we need to turn to the true Greatest of all time, The Lord Jesus. And realize that Jesus bats 1,000. And what makes Him the greatest is the fact that He is greater than the grave. The grave had no hold on Jesus. Though He was crucified on the cross, He resurrected and is alive today as we are going to see. And the thing that I want to encourage us to hold in view is that when we face various difficulties, challenges, and even failure, Jesus is greater than those things.

### MESSAGE:

Let's look together at Romans chapter 8. Begin reading with me in verse 31 and let's read through verse 34.

*<sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—**more than that, who was raised**—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* One of my favorite passages of Scripture.

You know, the obvious thing that leaps off the page here is the statement that Christ Jesus more than died, but was raised, resurrected. Jesus not only died on the cross, but he rose victoriously. And one of the most certain events in all of history is the resurrection of Jesus. Despite many attempts to explain away the resurrection, the certainty remains.

One of the most convincing pieces of evidence for the resurrection is the willingness on behalf of the disciples to preach it even in the face of threats on their lives. Writer Chuck Colson said it this way, "I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world - and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years?"<sup>iv</sup>

Jesus died, but He rose from the grave. Therefore, Jesus is greater than the grave. And because Jesus is greater than the grave, it means a couple of truths for us today. I want to cover those in our time today.

Because Jesus is greater than the grave, He is greater than...

### 1) Our Sin.

The passage we read begins by asking a series of rhetorical questions. What shall we say? Who is against us? What charge is against us? Who condemns us? The answers to these questions drive the reader to the only response that Jesus is greater than our sin because He has conquered the grave.

The first question, "What shall we say to these things?" What things? The promises and actions of God recorded in the chapters prior to chapter 8 of Romans. Things like Romans 5:8, *"<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Things like Romans 6:23, *"<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*<sup>v</sup>

The fact that these things are true means that no one can be against us. God has forgiven us. There is no charge against us. No one can condemn us. Why? Because Jesus, at the cross of calvary, took upon Himself our sin and shame, it was nailed to the cross, and we were, at that moment, blood bought and forgiven, and our salvation is secured by Jesus' resurrection. Paul says,

Three things I want to point out in this verse that proves Jesus is greater than our sin.<sup>vi</sup> First...

#### A) Jesus died for our sin.

Paul says that Christ Jesus is **the one** who died. The writer of Hebrews said, *"And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."* The purpose of Jesus' death on the cross was to make a one time for all time payment for your sin and mine. Jesus died to forgive our sin. Secondly, ...

#### B) Jesus finished our salvation.

Romans 8:34 continues, *"Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—**who is at the right hand of God.**"* Hebrews 1:3 gives us even more detail about Jesus being at the right hand of the Father. *After*

making purification for sins, he **sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Why is this significant?

Well, the Jewish Temple had no seats for the priests because the priests work of sacrifice was never finished. But Jesus, being the once and for all sacrifice for sin, is **seated** at the right hand of God. Why? Because the work of salvation has been completed. It was Jesus who said from the cross, “It is finished.” What was finished? Salvation is finished in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Jesus died for our sin, finished our salvation and thirdly...

### C) Jesus is interceding for us.

Romans 8:34 wraps up by saying, “*Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, **who indeed is interceding for us***.” Though Jesus’ work of salvation is finished, He has a continuing ministry, intercession. That is a word that means that He is our advocate and high priest. We gain access to God through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I love this verse because of the power it communicates to us. It demonstrates that Jesus is greater than the grave and therefore is greater than our sin. But do you know something that I often hear as a Pastor? People will say, “I know God has forgiven me, but I can’t seem to forgive myself.” Have you ever had that thought? I will often say to that, “Do you think you are greater than God?”<sup>vii</sup> To hold onto something that God has released is to position yourself as greater than God.

Listen, your past, your sin, your mistakes, your failures, if you are in Christ, have all been forgiven. Psalm 103:12 says, “*as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*” There is no end to traveling East and there is no end in traveling West. God permanently removes our sin from us.

This, we also can know, is a permanent state. In other words, we cannot lose salvation once it has been gained. Jesus said in John 10:27-29, “*27 My sheep [those who have placed their faith in Jesus] hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me,*

*is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.* Easter tells us that Jesus is greater than the grave and therefore is greater than our sin. Amen?!

Jesus being greater than the grave not only means that He is greater than our sin, but that He is also greater than...

### 2) Our Circumstances.

In the teaching series we are kicking off today, we are going to examine some of these in detail. I hope you’ll make it back each of the following weeks. It’s going to be a great study.

But today, I want us to see the overview Romans 8 provides us. Look at Romans 8:35 as we see that Jesus is greater than our circumstances. <sup>35</sup>*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

When I read this list, I don’t know about you, but I can relate. Have you ever felt the pressure of tribulation, distress, and persecution? Ever worried about how things were going to work out? Well, here, Paul mentions three categories of circumstances that is common to us all.

First, consider tribulation, distress and persecution. The word tribulation is a word that means “placed under pressure.”<sup>viii</sup> The word distress carries the idea of being hemmed in.<sup>ix</sup> And persecution refers to affliction.<sup>x</sup> We all have the common experience of pressure, being pressed in on all sides of life, and the experience of distress and affliction.

The second grouping is famine and nakedness. The idea here is a feeling of having inadequate provision.<sup>xi</sup> Have you ever wondered how you were going to make ends meet? Ever wondered about the security of your future? Have you ever worried about how you were going to provide for your family? These are circumstances that often result in the feelings of worry and anxiety.

The third and final grouping of circumstances mentioned in this verse is danger and sword. This referring to the fear of death.<sup>xii</sup>

We all experience worry, anxiety, conflicts, challenges, fears, and grief. This is why I think Paul mentions these very things in Romans 8:35. But consider the

conclusion Paul comes to. Verse 37 of Romans 8. ***37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.***

Paul says “in all these things.” What things? In our worry, our anxiety, our conflict, our challenges, our fears, and our grief. In all those things, we are more than conquerors. Paul is picturing the believer being surrounded by these circumstances, being pressed by these things that seek to steal our joy.

The phrase, “more than conquerors,” can actually be translated as “overwhelmingly conquer.”<sup>xiii</sup> One commentator I read said the original language can be translated at hyper conquerors.<sup>xiv</sup> In all the circumstances we experience in life, we are hyper conquerors! The idea meaning that there is power available that not only overcomes these things but even more than these things.

But Paul is very specific as to how we conquer these things. He says, “***we are more than conquerors through Him** [through Jesus] *who loved us.*” While we are not greater than our circumstances, Jesus is. And the fact that He is greater than the grave means He is greater than our circumstances.*

There is one other thing that I think is important to see in our passage of study this morning. Verses 38 and 39 of Romans 8. ***38 For I am sure that 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.***

Paul says, “he is sure.” That means he is fully convinced. How did Paul become so convinced about this truth we are talking about today? Well, he experienced each of the things he mentioned minus one, death. When he penned these words in the book of Romans, he knew what each circumstance felt like. The circumstances Paul faces are well documented in Acts. And the context by which he wrote his most famous words are these circumstances.

Philippians 4:11-13. ***11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.***

So, when Paul writes that he is convinced, his surety lies in the experience of his life that Jesus is greater than his circumstances. So he says, “I am sure nothing can separate me from the love of God.”

The question this presents to us all is, “Have you been convinced?” Are you sure? Is there anything that could keep you from loving or serving Jesus? Even if there was, He would never stop loving you.

Is there something that you fear? Something that is pressing in on you at this moment that seems overwhelming. Do you know that you can be a hyper conqueror through the one that is greater than the grave?

### **CLOSING ILLUSTRATION: We are the Champions<sup>xv</sup>**

Mark Batterson, in his book, “If: Trading Your If Only Regrets for God’s What If Possibilities,” reminds us of the 1977 power ballad, “We are the Champions.” It was the traditional encore at the end of performances by the British band, Queen. He pointed out that while it never reached the top of the charts, a team of scientific researchers dubbed it the catchiest song in the history of pop music. Maybe it’s the unique combination of jazz chords, major and minor 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> harmonies, or perhaps it was the male high C and falsetto belted out by lead singer, Freddie Mercury. Regardless, once it gets in your head, it’s tough to get out. And nearly three decades after the original recording, it was voted as the world’s favorite song in a world-wide music poll. “We are the champions, my friend. And we’ll keep on fighting to the end.” Freddie Mercury is no theologian, but this song is right on. We love this song.

I think this speaks to the fact that we all want to be overcomers. We all want to experience victory. Everyone loves being a champion. But when it comes to the circumstances of our lives, we often find victory few and far between and defeat overwhelms us.

But there is an ultimate champion. His name is Jesus. And He proved His dominance by conquering the grave. Jesus is alive. And His victory has secured for believers in Him forgiveness of sin and endurance in difficulties. Jesus is greater than anything you can place after that phrase. But are you sure of that? Are you convinced.

### **CONCLUSION: Invite the Band to come back up.**

I want to invite the band to come back up and lead us in a time of response.

As they come, I want you to search your heart as to what The Lord is speaking to you today.

Do you know Jesus as the redeemer of your sin? The Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Your sin and my sin has wrought devastation in our lives. Scripture continues to tell us that the wages of our sin, what we have earned because of our sin, is death. That we are dead in our trespasses and sins. But there is the free gift of God that leads to eternal life by way of surrendering to Jesus as the Lord of your life.

Jesus teaches that this transfer of death to life is not mere lip service. It comes by way of being born again unto a relationship with Jesus. It means that while we have a physical birthday, we must have a spiritual birthday. A moment by which we recognize the gravity of our sin and surrender our lives to the Lordship of Christ.

Are you born again? Have you come to the point in your life where you have recognized your sin and repented of that sin and turned to Jesus as Lord? Do you have a spiritual birthday? If not, today can be the day of salvation for you.

You might ask, "How can I be saved today?" In a moment, I am going to pray, our elders will make their way to the front here, and we will have a time of response. If you are here today and you would like to know how you can have a relationship with Jesus, or if you have questions as to whether or not you have done that, simply come and take us by the hand and just say three words. I need Jesus. We would love nothing more than on this Easter to visit with you about what it means to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.

For others of you here today, you are weighed down by many circumstances surrounding your life. You understand what it means to be hemmed in, defeated, discouraged, anxious, and riddled with fear. For you, it is our desire that you know that Jesus is greater than those things in your life. Perhaps you could benefit from some prayer. We would love to pray with you and over you today that you might find hope in Jesus.

Whatever it is, and however The Lord leads, I simply want you to respond to Him today. We are here for you. I'm going to pray, we are going to sing, but let's also respond to His lead in our lives.

[PRAY]

## ENDNOTES:

---

<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation of this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 1-8*, Moody Publishing, Chicago, 1991; John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1994; Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2000; P.G. Mathew, "Up From the Grave He Arose," sermon preached at Grace Valley Christian Center, Davis, CA, Sunday, March 31, 2013, accessed online: <https://gracevalley.org/sermon/up-from-the-grave-he-rose/>; Skip Heitzig, "Heart and Soul: For the Love of God," taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, October 27, 2019; Skip Heitzig, "Heart and Soul: A Midterm Exam," taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, October 20, 2019; J.D. Greear, "The Book of Romans: More Than Conquerors," taught at The Summit Church on Sunday, August 4, 2019; Dr. Jack Graham, "Essential Gospel: More Than Conquerors," preached at Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, TX on October 24, 2021, accessed online: <https://prestonwood.org/media/watch-services/more-than-conquerors/>; Newspring Church, "Jesus Is Greater," article accessed online: <https://newspring.cc/articles/jesus-is-greater>

<sup>ii</sup> Sermon illustration idea inspired by an illustration I found online at Sunday Sermon Illustrations. Accessed: <https://www.voicings.com/illustration/15838>.

<sup>iii</sup> song written by Don Schlitz and recorded by country music artist Kenny Rogers. Released in April 1999 as the first single from the album *She Rides Wild Horses*.

<sup>iv</sup> Accessed online: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/555921-i-know-the-resurrection-is-a-fact-and-watergate-proved>

<sup>v</sup> Jack Graham mentioned these scriptures in reference to the first question in his sermon listed above.

<sup>vi</sup> The four things are pointed out and discussed in detail in John R. W. Stott's, *The Message of Romans*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1994, pages 256-257.

<sup>vii</sup> I read this in J.D. Greear's sermon and it echoed in my experience.

<sup>viii</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 1-8*, Moody Publishing, Chicago, 1991, page 511.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xi</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1994, page 257.

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiii</sup> MacArthur, page 514.

<sup>xiv</sup> Skip Heitzig, "Heart and Soul: For the Love of God," taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, October 27, 2019.

<sup>xv</sup> Illustration written by Mark Battison. Pastor Jack Graham used this illustration in his sermon.