

INTRODUCTION

1. We come now to the last section in 1 Corinthians 15 on the bodily resurrection
2. Please take God's Word and turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15 as we look at verses 50-58
3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

(50) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

(51) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

(52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

(53) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

(54) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

(55) "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR S?"

(56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

(57) but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 - NASB

4. Someone has written, "There is a preacher of the old school, but he speaks as boldly as ever

5. He is not popular, though the world is his parish, and he travels every part of the globe and speaks in every language
6. He visits the poor, calls upon the rich, preaches to people of every religion and no religion
7. And the subject of his sermon is always the same
8. He is an eloquent preacher, often stirring feelings which no other preacher could and bringing tears to eyes that never weep
9. His arguments none are able to refute, nor is there any heart that has remained unmoved by the force of his appeals
10. He shatters life with his message
11. Most people hate him, everyone fears him. His name?
12. Death
13. Every tombstone is his pulpit
14. Every newspaper prints his text. And some day, every one of you will be his sermon" (<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1882/victory-over-death>)
15. That is so true
16. Unless the rapture occurs first, none of us will escape the sting of death
17. But death has to occur for their to be a bodily resurrection
18. Paul illustrated this with the seed
19. He said in verse 36, "...That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies"
20. Just as the seed dies so does the body
21. And as the seed comes alive to become some kind of plant, so does the body when it is raised to new life
22. In chapter 15 we have been seeing the bodily resurrection as Paul's theme
23. It began as a response that Paul had for those who questioned the resurrection

24. Paul said in verse 12, "Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"
25. If there is no bodily resurrection, then Christ hasn't been raised from the dead (v.13),
26. Our preaching and faith are in vain (v.14)
27. We are liars because we said God raised Christ from the dead (v.15)
28. If Christ is not raised you're faith is worthless and you're still in your sins (vv.16-17)
29. And those how have died in Christ are lost forever (v.18)
30. And we are to be pitied because our hope is only in this life not the next (v.19)
31. But Christ, Paul says, "has been raised from the dead" (v.20)
32. And because He was raised, so will we
33. He is "the first fruits of those who are asleep" (v.20)
34. So Paul has given in this chapter evidence for Christ's resurrection (vv.1-11),
35. The implications of denying the bodily resurrection (vv.12-19),
36. The plan (vv.20-28) and incentives (vv.29-34) of the resurrection,
37. And a description and explanation of our resurrection bodies (vv.35-49)
38. Now in this last section, he gives the marvelous victory that the resurrection brings for all believers
39. In verses 50-53, he begins with...

LESSON

I. THE TRANSFORMATION (vv.50-53)

Paul says, "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."

Paul gives 4 wonderful truths in verses 50-53

First...

1. We cannot go to heaven in these perishable bodies (v.50a)

1. The bodies we have now are "flesh and blood"

2. It is a "natural body" (v.44)

3. Even unbelievers will have a body in hell

Matthew 10:28 says, "...fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

4. These bodies are "perishable" (v.42), "dishonorable" (v.43), "weak" (v.43), "natural" (v.44), "earthy" (v.47) so they "cannot inherit the kingdom of God"

5. In other words, our present earthly bodies cannot enter the eternal state as such

2. The "perishable cannot inherit the imperishable" (v.51b)

3. Not everyone will die some will be raptured (v.51a)

"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep (die), but we will all be changed"

1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 says, "(14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Jesus said it this way in John 14:1-3, "(1) 'Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. (2) In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. (3) If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.'"

1. Whether at the resurrection of the just or at the rapture where believers join other believers and Christ in the air, "we will all be changed"
 2. The word for "changed" (allasso) is a future, passive, indicative verb
 3. That means the change that is to take place is in the future at the resurrection
 4. It's also passive meaning God will bring about this change in all believers
 5. The indicative indicates this as a fact
 6. It's certain to happen as Paul has stated here
 7. Notice also...
4. All believers will be transformed in an instant (vv.51b-52)
1. Paul describes it as "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"
 1. The word for "moment" is atomos, from which we get the word "atom," which in Greek, simply meant the smallest possible particle which could not be divided
 2. Literally, it means that which cannot be cut
 3. In other words, in the smallest amount of time of which there is no smaller. In the most finite unit of time, we will be changed. It's going to be so fast you won't even realize it. And the minute it happens, you'll forget what you used to be
 2. The second word is "twinkling" (pipe)
 1. The twinkling is not the blinking
 2. "The twinkling is the time it takes for the light to go from the iris to the retina."
 3. Some scientist measured this and said, "It's one-sixth of a nanosecond."
 4. A nanosecond is One-one-thousand
 5. A microsecond is one-millionth of a second
 6. A nanosecond is one-thousandth of a microsecond

7. And this is going to happen in one-sixth of a nanosecond
8. That's instantaneously
3. When is it going to happen? "at the last trumpet"
 1. This is when "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess.4:16-17)
 2. By that trumpet God will summon all of His people to Himself
 3. During the Civil War a group of soldiers had to spend a winter night without tents in an open field. During the night it snowed several inches, and at dawn the chaplain reported a strange sight. The snow-covered soldiers looked like the mounds of new graves, and when the bugle sounded reveille a man immediately rose from each mound of snow, dramatically reminding the chaplain of this passage from 1 Corinthians. (MacArthur, John F., Jr. [*1 Corinthians*](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)
 4. Paul concludes by stating again that "this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality" (v.53)

When this occurs we will see...

II. THE VICTORY (vv.54-56)

"(54) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. (55) "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" (56) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law."

1. Death is swallowed up in victory (vv.54-55)

1. The last phrase of verse 54 is a quotation from Isaiah 25:8

2. The Isaiah text reads, “He [the Lord of Hosts] will swallow up death for all time” (Isa. 25:8; cf. v. 6)
3. This text in Hebrew literally says, "Death is swallowed up forever."
4. The term “swallow” has to do with total destruction, total end to death.
5. When the great transformation comes, the great victory will come
6. Verse 55, which says, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" is a quotation from Hosea 13:14
7. Paul is taunting death and uses the metaphor of death leaving a sting
8. Like a bee leaves its stinger in its victim
9. Death has left its sting in Christ
10. As such, Christ bore the whole of death's sting in order that we would not have to bear any of it
11. Lenski writes, "Death is not merely destroyed so that it cannot do further harm while all of the harm which it has wrought on God’s children remains. The tornado is not merely checked so that no additional homes are wrecked while those that were wrecked still lie in ruin. The destruction of death is far more intense: death and all of its apparent victories are undone for God’s children. What looks like a victory for death and like a defeat for us when our bodies die and decay shall be utterly reversed so that death dies in absolute defeat, and our bodies live again in absolute victory. Yea, more! for these bodies will be restored, not merely again to be “flesh and blood,” but henceforth to be incorruptible, immortal, “spiritual” (v. 44), “heavenly” (v. 49). (Lenski, R. C. H. [The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. Print.)

2. The sting of death is sin (v.56)

1. Death is caused by sin
2. Adam and Eve were told in Genesis 2:16-17, "(16) ...“From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; (17) but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

3. Genesis 3:6-7 says records their disobedience to God's command:

"(6) When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (7) Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings."

4. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

5. And in case some are wondering if they have sinned, Paul says in Romans 3:10, "There is none righteous, not even one."

6. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

3. The power of sin is the law (v.56)

1. The law reveals God's standards

2. When the law is broken it reveals man's sin

3. If there were no law then there would be no transgression

4. Romans 4:15 says, "Where there is no law neither is there violation."

5. Men die because they have broken God's law

6. Those who claim they have never heard it have it written on their hearts

7. Paul said in Romans 2:14-15, "(14) For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, (15) in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them."

In verse 57, Paul gives...

III. THE THANKSGIVING (v.57)

He says, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. Paul gives thanks to the One who will transform our bodies
2. And who made the victory over sin and death
3. God did this "through our Lord Jesus Christ"
 1. We cannot live sinlessly and fulfill the law
 2. Nor can we remove sin once we have committed it, or remove its consequence, which is death
 3. But Jesus did
 4. On our behalf Jesus lived a sinless life, fulfilling the law; removed our sin by Himself paying the penalty for it, satisfying God with a perfect sacrifice; and conquered death by being raised from the dead
 5. All of that great victory He accomplished for us and gives to us
 6. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13)
 7. He took our curse and our condemnation and gives us victory in their place
 8. How can we do anything but thank and praise God for what He has done for us?
 9. He has promised us an imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual body for one that is perishable, dishonorable, weak, and natural
 10. He promises us the heavenly in exchange for the earthly, the immortal in exchange for the mortal
 11. We know these promises are assured because He has already given us victory over sin and death
 12. For Christians death has no more power (Heb. 2:14–15), because God has taken away our sin
 13. For Christians death is but the passing of our spirits from this life to the next, the leaving of earth and going to be with Christ

14. In Christ's victory over death, death's sting is removed; it is declawed, defanged, disarmed, destroyed
15. "And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire, ... and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain" (Rev. 20:14; 21:4). (MacArthur, John F., Jr. [*1 Corinthians*](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.)

If we truly believe and if we were truly thankful that our resurrection is sure, then we should prove our assurance and thankfulness in Paul's final...

IV. THE EXHORTATION (v.58)

Paul says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

1. Be steadfast

"steadfast" (hedraios) refers to being "seated, settled, firmly situated"

2. Be immovable

1. "immovable" (ametakinetos) carries the same basic idea but with more intensity

1. It denotes being totally immobile and motionless
2. Paul's not talking about being moved away from God's will or being moved from within
3. He's talking about doing God's will of "always abounding in the work of the Lord"
4. Gordon Clark gives a helpful paraphrase of this verse: "Therefore we should mortify emotion, be steadfast, unchangeable, not erratic and scatterbrained, easily discouraged, and should multiply our good works in the knowledge that the Lord will make them profitable." (MacArthur, John F., Jr. [*1 Corinthians*](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur

New Testament Commentary.)

3. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord"
 1. "Abounding" carries the idea of exceeding the requirements, of overflowing or over doing
 2. Some of God's most faithful and fruitful saints have lived to old age and been active and productive in His service to the end
 3. Many others, however, have seen their lives shortened for the very reason that they were abounding, overflowing and untiring, in service to Christ
 1. Henry Martyn, the British missionary to India and Persia, determined "to burn out for God," which he did before he was thirty-five
 2. David Brainerd, one of the earliest missionaries to American Indians, died before he was thirty
 3. We know very little of Epaphroditus, except that he was a "brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier" of Paul's who "came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life" (Phil. 2:25, 30)
 4. He became so lost in godly service that he literally became sick unto death because of it

CONCLUSION

1. Until the Lord returns there are souls to reach and ministries of every sort to be accomplished
2. Every Christian should work without compromise as the Lord has gifted and leads
3. All our resources should be invested in nothing that does not in some way contribute to the work of the Lord
4. Our praise and thanksgiving must be given hands and feet
5. James tells us, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (James 2:26)

6. Our work for the Lord, if it is truly for Him and done in His power, cannot fail to accomplish what He wants accomplished
7. Every good work believers do in this life has eternal benefits that the Lord Himself guarantees
8. “Behold, I am coming quickly,” Jesus says, “and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done” (Rev. 22:12)
9. We have God’s own promise that our toil [labor to the point of exhaustion] is not in vain in the Lord
10. What a marvelous God we serve
11. Let's thank Him now as we pray