

OUR GOD-GIVEN VICTORY

1 Cor. 15:50-58

Intro: I have stated in the CBC News this month that which I would like to emphasize this morning -- that the two fundamental truths of the Christian faith are these:

- 1) The death of Christ for our sins.
- 2) The resurrection of Christ, bodily, physically, from the grave.

We have this stated at the beginning of the chapter we are considering together this morning.

We must pay attention not only to the fact that Christ died, but we must also note carefully the nature of the One Who died. It was "Christ" -- with all that that means: the Son of God Who became man.

But we must also notice why He died: "for our sins."

He died to save us from sin's penalty,  
from sin's power,  
and eventually from sin itself!

Sin has had tremendous effects upon man and upon all of creation -- but a study of the Scriptures indicates that Christ, in His death, has overcome every disastrous effect of sin. We do not yet see all of the results of His death, but eventually we will!

EVERYTHING DEAR TO US AS CHRISTIANS DEPENDS UPON THE FACTS THAT CHRIST REALLY DIED FOR OUR SINS, AND THAT HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD ON THAT MEMORABLE THIRD DAY.

Without these truths, we must say what Paul says, for example, in 1 Cor. 15:14b, "our preaching" is "vain, and your faith is also vain."

One of the victories which Christ claimed by His death and resurrection was victory over death -- victory over physical death.

Death is spoken of in three ways in the Bible:

- 1) Physical death -- with which we are all familiar.
- 2) Spiritual death -- which means separation from God, the truth which points out man's need for eternal life, which is salvation.
- 3) Eternal death -- which is the penalty which rests upon all who leave this life not having received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

All three of these are inter-related. They all are the result of sin. But in our text we are concerned with the resurrection

of our bodies -- and the place that this has in our salvation.

Let us note, first of all,

## I. THE AWFUL REALITY OF DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

We see it in such words as:

- 1) "Corruptible."
- 2) "Mortal."
- 3) "Sting."
- 4) "Victory."

In 1 Cor. 15:26 Paul speaks of "death" as an "enemy"!

In Rom. 5:21 Paul speaks of sin reigning unto death!

One hymn writer speaks of "death shadowing us and ours."

Only two men in all of history have escaped the dreadful power of this enemy:

- 1) Enoch.
- 2) Elijah.

A generation yet to come, possibly some in our generation, are going to escape death, but the general rule is stated in Heb. 9:27,

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die,  
but after this the judgment."

Look <sup>again</sup> at the words mentioned above which appear in our text. Most of us have felt that deadly "sting."

But now, with the hopelessness of all of this fresh upon our minds, let us consider what Paul is teaching us in this passage. His words are not words of despair and discouragement, but words of hope and peace and victory. Let us see why.

Before we get to the good part, it might seem that my second point only adds to the despair. Look at v. 50 where we see

## II. AN ABSOLUTE IMPOSSIBILITY (1 Cor. 15:50).

When Paul speaks here about inheriting "the kingdom of God," he has to be speaking of the coming, eternal state -- the kingdom that the Lord had in mind when He taught His disciples to pray,

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth,  
as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

"Flesh and blood" cannot mean simply the body, because Paul is teaching in this passage that our bodies are included in God's redemptive plan, and that we will be in our bodies

throughout eternity.

Neither can "flesh and blood" have reference to our sinful nature which is sometimes called, the flesh. This is clear because these very words, "flesh and blood," are used in Heb. 2:14 of our Lord Who certainly did not have a sin nature. The verse reads:

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (i.e., Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same . . ."

' So "flesh and blood" in 1 Cor. 15:50 simply means the body as it is now! We could never live forever in the kingdom of God in the bodies we now have. They must be changed so that, while they will be the same bodies, they will no longer be subject to death.

When we get to our text in this chapter, Paul has already discussed how people will be when they are raised. (Note the question in v. 35, and the answer in the verses that follow.)

What we are ready for now is this: When will the change take place?

Please note that Paul is not giving us the whole story of resurrection here -- just the part that applies to believers. There is another aspect of the truth altogether which has to do with people who do not know the Lord. The doctrine of an eternal hell also necessitates that the bodies of unbelievers will be changed, because in man's present state he would not suffer the torments of eternal fire forever.

But note now:

### III. A DIVINE REVELATION (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

"Mystery" simply means that Paul is about to tell us one of God's secrets -- something which has not been revealed in Scripture before

It is like Paul's statement in 1 Thess. 4:15,

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord . . ."

What is it?

- A. First, that not all believers will die.
- B. Second, that all believers will be changed -- the living as well as the dead.
- C. Third, the time of the change: "at the last trump." Paul does not give us a date, but he points to this

event which marks the coming of the Lord (described also in 1 Thess. 4:16, 17 -- which read):

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

But there is more here!

D. Fourth, the nature of the change.

Why does Paul use two words here: "corruptible" and "mortal"?

V. 52 helps us with our answer: "the dead shall be raised incorruptible."

This would mean that the change in the living would be described by the word, "immortality."

The final condition of the two is the same, but a living saint has a "mortal" body because it is subject to death; the body of a dead saint is "corruptible" because it is decaying in the grave.

Cf. Phil. 3:20, 21.

E. The result: the Word of God is fulfilled and "Death is swallowed up in victory."

All through human history death has had the victory; the day is coming when death will be finally defeated and our Lord will claim the victory which He won on the Cross and in His resurrection from the dead.

This leads to

IV. A TWOFOLD CHALLENGE AND A SHOUT OF VICTORY (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

This also has its roots in the OT: Hosea 13:14.

Some versions read v. 55,

"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING."

But with either reading, the meaning remains the same.

Sin is the sting of death, because there would have been no death if there had been no sin. And the law has intensified the sin of man. But our Lord put away sin, and satisfied

every demand of the law -- and so He has gained the victory over death, the consequences of man's sin!

Note the victory shout in v. 57:

- 1) The glory goes to God.
- 2) The victory was won by Christ. It is only to be found in Him.
- 3) God is the One Who gives that victory to us, setting us free from sin and from death and from the grave.

(Appeal to those present who do not know Christ in salvation: "Do you understand? Do you see this -- that your only hope is in Christ? Trust him now, and be saved from your sin.")

But there is a final point:

V. THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS GREAT TRUTH (1 Cor. 15:58).

"Be" actually means, Become. The truth was to have a practical effect upon them so that they would become what they were not at this time in their lives and service.

Note that character precedes their ministry:

- 1) "Be steadfast" -- have a fixed purpose.
- 2) "Unmoveable" -- be persistent.
- 3) "Always abounding in the work of the Lord" -- excelling, always on active duty.

Why? "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

How do we know this? Because Christ is raised, and because even the death of the saints does not in any way nullify "the work of the Lord."

Concl: Let me close with two final words especially for those of you who believe in the Lord:

- 1) Surely this passage ought to cause us on this Easter Sunday to praise God for such a victory which He has graciously given to us in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) Are you serving the Lord -- "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding"? If not, why not? What are you doing that is more important than this?

May God move upon our hearts to praise Him, and to serve Him, "looking for that blessed hope and . . ." (Tit. 2:13, 14).