



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Mystery, The Victory & the Challenge (1 Cor. 15:50-58)

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For This Week Only

- **Wednesday, April 23, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Wednesday, April 23, 8:30 PM in Office #225**
(Sen. Wayne Wallingford's office)

Written by Philip P. Bliss, 1875.

Man of Sorrows! what a name
For the Son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we;
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
"Full atonement!" can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Lifted up was He to die;
"It is finished!" was His cry;
Now in Heav'n exalted high.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew His song we'll sing:
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

INTRODUCTION

Almost 2000 years ago a Man was raised from the dead and since then, people have gathered to celebrate this great event. Every Sunday (not just the one traditionally called "Easter") people all over the world gather with others to worship, to learn, to proclaim and to fellowship with this Man.

But then again, Jesus Christ is no ordinary Man. He was, and still is, God Incarnate, God in the flesh, who lived a perfect life and gave Himself to be a sacrifice to remove the sins of God's people so that they may be brought back into a relationship with Him. And He did accomplish all according to God's gracious predetermined plan (Acts 2:22-23).

The Apostle Paul discussed this work of Christ in His letter to the church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

Paul continued by bringing up the numerous witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (15:5-12); which included himself. He then confronted those who deny a resurrection. He declared that if there is no resurrection then Jesus is still dead, they are still in their sins and Paul is a liar (15:13-19).

However, the Apostle wrote, "Christ has been raised from the dead" (15:20). He went on to discuss the results of Jesus' resurrection; including the fact that those who follow Christ will also be raised (15:20-49).

At one point, Paul posed a problem—"Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (15:50). In the context of this passage, the "Kingdom of God" is in reference to the eternal state of God's kingdom; what we call heaven. The problem is that one's current temporal body will be living in something eternal. And this simply will not work.

In this study, we are going to examine Paul's answer to this dilemma and the impact that it has on our lives—not just in the future, but also for today.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²in 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. ⁵³For 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 STING?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

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PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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the law;⁵⁷but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, 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.

THE MYSTERY (15:50-53)

In presenting the gracious solution to the problem posed, the Apostle Paul reveals a “mystery”. Typically, in Paul’s letters, a “mystery” is not a puzzling predicament that needs to be solved, but rather a secret that is being revealed. The answer Paul is about to give is something that was once hidden or unknown, but now is revealed for all to see.

The mystery Paul is revealing contains three elements. First, all followers of Christ will be changed. Paul is writing this letter to the church in Corinth and his use of the first person plural tells the reader that this change will only take place for those who are believers.

To adapt to their new homes, the bodies of the believers will be changed. This is true for those who are still alive at Christ’s return (“we will not all sleep”) and for those who have died. This is the great hope that Paul passed along to the church in Thessalonica:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 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. 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. 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The second element is that this will take place “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (15:52). One of the quickest movements of a human body is the blink of an eye. Paul is highlighting the quickness of the moment.

The third element is that which is temporal will take on that which is eternal (15:53). Followers who have died will be raised with this immortal, imperishable body and those who are still alive at the time will instantly be changed. John MacArthur calls it a “supernatural metamorphosis”. It will not be a long process, but “an instantaneous recreation from one form to another, from the earthly to the heavenly.”¹ Like a fish needs to be in water and the polar bear needs to live at the North Pole and not the Equator, the body of the Christian will need to be changed to adapt to its new environment. Therefore, the mortal will take immortality for the place which the believer goes will be an immortal place.

There are some things that Paul did not reveal to us that we wonder about. One question is when this “last trumpet” will sound. Jesus made it quite clear that no one knows the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36); even though many have tried, and some still are, to predict it. Neither did Paul reveal what these new bodies will look like or how one will recognize another.

But the mystery the Apostle revealed is enough to give much hope, peace and boldness to the followers of Jesus. For the grave is not the end of life.

THE VICTORY (15:54-57)

When the mortal has taken on immortality, victory over death will be finally and fully accomplished. “Death is a visitor who can call upon a man at any time” wrote Louis L’Amour. It is definitely an unwelcome guest. But for the believer, death is a defeated foe.

Death entered God’s perfect creation because of sin (Genesis 3). The man was warned by God not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Death would be the punishment for disobedience (Genesis 2:16-17). And when Adam and Eve disobeyed, they found it was no mere bluff. They were separated from God, an animal was killed to provide clothing, they soon lost a son by murder and they themselves would physically die. Death is not natural; it became a part of life because of sin.

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But the Apostle Paul taunts this formidable foe by quoting the Word of God. “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting” (Hosea 13:14).

How can he do that in light of death’s power over all of humanity? The answer to this is the point of 1 Corinthians 15. As stated before, the Apostle highlighted the resurrection of Jesus throughout this chapter:

- It was foretold by the Scriptures (15:3-4),
- The resurrected Jesus was seen by hundreds of witnesses (15:5-12); including Paul himself,
- It is the foundation and assurance for the believer’s hope of salvation and their own resurrection (15:13-49).

Because of Jesus’ death, the sting of death, which is sin, has been removed. Like a bee leaves it’s stinger in the one stung, sin was attached to Christ at His death effectively removing it from the children of God. Therefore, death (which is still a consequence of sin) has no sting, has no power, and has no victory over the follower of Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus three days after His sacrificial death assures the believer that God accepted the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice, of Christ. It also gives the assurance that while one may still die a physical death, he or she will be raised.

FOR THOUGH WE STILL CARRY ABOUT WITH US THE REMAINS OF SIN, IT, NEVERTHELESS, DOES NOT REIGN IN US: THOUGH IT STILL STINGS US, IT DOES NOT DO SO FATALLY, BECAUSE ITS EDGE IS BLUNTED, SO THAT IT DOES NOT PENETRATE INTO THE VITALS OF THE SOUL. --JOHN CALVIN

What confidence would one have if Christ is still in the grave? How would one know if His sacrifice did any good in forgiving our sin? How would one know if there truly is a resurrection of the dead? There would be none. This is why Paul earlier wrote “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most

to be pitied” (15:16-19). But then he boldly declared, “But now Christ has been raised from the dead” (15:20).

The believer must always view death in light of the resurrection. This same Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi and said “To live is Christ, but to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). If he were to continue to live, he had the opportunities to serve Christ and His Kingdom. If were to die, it would be better for he would then be in presence of Christ in His Kingdom.

There is a sadness when we are separated from the ones we love here on this earth. But for the believer, it is a temporary separation. The reunion on “that great gettin’ up mornin’” will be glorious and eternal; therefore, there is no real sting and definitely no victory for the grave.

THE CHALLENGE (15:58)

As Paul wrapped this section and heads into the concluding remarks and salutations of this letter, he wrote “Therefore...”

...be steadfast and immovable. He called the believers to be like Abraham who “did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God...being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised” (Romans 4: 20a, 21). There is no room for doubt, for fearfulness, for being timid. Death has been defeated, not even the grave can cause the follower of Christ to cower.

...always abounding in the work of the Lord. The child of God is to be found in serving the Lord with gladness; to love mercy and do justice; to be a cheerful giver; to trust, obey and delight in the LORD; to abstain from fleshly lusts; to live holy lives; to proclaim the gospel message throughout the world; to meet together to worship and encouragement; to grow in the grace and knowledge of God; to love and be humble toward our fellow brothers and sisters.

...you know your work is not done in vain. “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve” (Colossians 3:23-24). It would truly be a pitiful situation to serve the Lord in all holiness and resisting the things of this world to simply die and have it all be for naught. But since death has been swallowed up in

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victory, the labors for the child of God will not be forgotten and a reward will be waiting.

CONCLUSION

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then let this serve as a reminder of the great promise that God has in store for His people. Be encouraged. Don't give up hope. Don't give in to the temptation to despair and doubt.

Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. One day, these mortal bodies filled with pain, disease, and decay will be changed into immortal bodies which will never die. Sin has been removed. Death has been defeated. This brings great hope, comfort and courage. Join the Apostle Paul in praise: "thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ".

If you are not following Christ, then these promises and hope are not for you. You have no hope at all since you will stand before a holy, righteous judge with all your sins unaccounted for and you will be pronounced guilty and pay the penalty—eternal separation from God.

God, in His love, through His Son Jesus Christ, can forgive a person of his or her sins. This is the point of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is reason for the Easter Sunday which was just celebrated. You can have this hope, if you take Christ as your portion and look to Him for your salvation and forgiveness.

Are you interested?

¹ John F. MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 443.