

VICTORY OVER DEATH

“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ESV)

There will come a day, when death will be no more (**Revelation 21:4**), when this final wretched enemy (**1 Corinthians 15:26**) will be cast into the lake of fire once-and-for-all (**Revelation 20:14**). Death’s talons are sunk deep into the flesh of this fallen world, but Satan no longer wields the power of death like a terrifying trident of anguish over the lives of believers. God’s people have been delivered from the *fear of death* (**Hebrews 2:14,15**). By conquering death, Jesus rendered the devil ultimately powerless against the saints. As John MacArthur says, “The fear of death and its spiritual bondage have been brought to an end through the work of Christ.” In **1 Corinthians 15:54-57**, The Apostle Paul begins to draw his first letter to the Corinthians to a close by boldly taunting death. He quotes **Isaiah 25:8** and **Hosea 13:14** to drive home his point, with passion, that death has lost its sting!

Death has plagued the human condition ever since the fall of our primogenitor, Adam. From the violent sword song of Lamech (**Genesis 4:23-24**) to Joshua’s annihilation of the Anakim (**Joshua 11:21-22**). From the stoning of Steven (**Acts 7:54-60**) to the gruesome death of the heroes of the faith who were killed with the sword or sawn in two (**Hebrews 11:37**), death has reverberated with a haunting echo through the annals of time. With frigid callus and insatiable gluttony, death has devoured mankind with greedy efficiency.

Against this black backdrop of the daunting destruction of dying men, bursts the Resurrection of Jesus Christ shining its piercing rays of brilliant light, into the darkest caverns of the cursed creation. Paul communicates this awesome truth to the troubled church in Corinth. He begins chapter 15 by reminding the believers in Corinth of the glory of the Gospel, according to the Scriptures. He highlights the *euaggelion* (good tidings/news, the Gospel) as being of first importance. As the crescendo of this good message rises the Resurrection of the only Man Who has ever defeated death, The Man Christ Jesus! Paul continues, with lock tight logic and shows how the resurrection of the believer is an absolute surety that hinges on the fact that Christ has been raised. He is so confident in this truth that he unapologetically states that, **“if Christ has not been raised, [the believer’s] faith is futile, and [they] are still dead in [their] sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17)**. Paul moves deeper into the topic of the resurrection of the believer’s body. He says that, **“the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:54)**. Believers in Jesus Christ go immediately into the presence of Christ when their soul separates from their body at death (**2 Corinthians 5:8**). The scorpion like sting of death, has been dismembered and death for the believer is merely a doorway into the glowing presence of Christ. This is why Paul could say elsewhere that, **“to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21)**.

The concept of resurrection is knit throughout the created order, dry cracked seeds blossom into bursting and beautiful flowers, the darkness of the night flees at the rising of the radiant sun, a sturdy oak lurches forth from the acorn embedded in black soil. Martin Luther points to the seasons to trumpet this truth, *“Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection*

VICTORY OVER DEATH

not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime." With the beauty of resurrection strewn about, nowhere is it more glorious than in the resurrection of the rising Sun of Righteousness, Who brings healing to His people (**Malachi 4:2**). The resurrection of the believer is like the leaping joy of a calf bounding through a sunny meadow, released from the captivity of death, and invigorated with joy everlasting. Thanks be to Christ that death is dead in the death of Christ, and the victory over death, in resurrection bliss, is the victory that we possess in the Resurrected King! **"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)**

How does the future resurrection of your body help you to be faithful now in the Christian life?

Why does death still bring fear to those who know that death has lost its sting?

What can you do to cultivate an unshakeable confidence in the Resurrection of Jesus, Paul possesses?

Why was it necessary for Christ to die and rise in order to conquer death?

Kevin Huggins